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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE MOMENT FROM RESIDENT EVIL 4?

DARRAN JONES

Playing it on Oculus Quest 2 and realising just how well it had been adapted for the new medium by Armature Studio.
Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful daughters and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!
Currently playing: *The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild*
Favourite game of all time: *Strider*

TIM EMPEY

Smugly playing it at home before most other people because I got my hands on the review code.
Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they go
Currently playing: *Atomic Heart*
Favourite game of all time: *God Hand*

NICK THORPE

I've not played much of the game, but that opening section where Leon ends up besieged in the village really made an impression on me.
Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III
Currently playing: *Kirby And The Forgotten Land*
Favourite game of all time: *Sonic The Hedgehog*

ANDY SALTER

The bit where you're in the underground, get knocked out and when you come round the Doctor tells you who you really are… oh wait, that's *STALKER: SOC.*
Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!
Currently modding: *STALKER: Anomaly GAMMA*
Favourite game of all time: *Rome: Total War* although I guess it's the *Remastered* edition now.

PAUL DRURY

I have vivid memories of watching my mates Jamie and Noel play through it while I drank white cider. Scary on many levels.
Expertise: Michael Jackson's Sonic obsession
Currently playing: *Backfirewall_*
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*

ANDREW FISHER

I love the motion controls of the Wii version, it makes it even more intense.
Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch
Currently playing: *Akka Arrh*
Favourite game of all time: *Wizball*

GRAEME MASON

Those creepy credits where you realise the Ganado were once normal people.
Expertise: Adjusting the tape azimuth with a screwdriver
Currently Playing: *Dead Space* (2023)
Favourite game of all time: *Resident Evil 4*

RORY MILNE

The first encounter with a group of villagers is a revelation. Headshots, armshots to make them drop weapons, footshots – anything goes! The sheer variety is just so freeing.
Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing
Currently playing: *TOCA: Touring Car Championship*
Favourite game of all time: *Tempest*

PAUL ROSE

I don't know if this can be classed as a favourite moment, but getting attacked by the chainsaw man for the first time is the most memorable… Awful!
Expertise: Winging it
Currently playing: *Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga*
Favourite game of all time: *Half-Life 2*

LOADING...

Few games have excited me as much as *Resident Evil 4*. I can still recall when *games™* received early info about the game, revealing all the changes being made to Capcom's popular series and no one quite believing what they were reading. When I finally saw the game being demoed, my gob was well and truly smacked and I lifted up the GameCube to check no tomfoolery was afoot. I ordered myself a US copy, booked some time off and found myself mesmerised by the sheer scope, pace and variety *Resident Evil 4* offered. Based on the games that followed, from *Gears Of War* to *Dead Space*, I wasn't the only person stunned by Capcom's ambitious makeover of its popular series.

So to celebrate the release of its remake, we've not only looked at the impact of this astonishing game but have also put together a fantastic 32-page book of the series, something every *Resident Evil* fan should love. If you're not a fan of things that go bump in the night then you'll find plenty of great articles covering everything from Sega's System 24 arcade board to *Stunt Car Racer*, *Shining Force*, *Lionheart* and much more, meaning this issue should have something for everyone.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

retro GAMER
RESIDENT EVIL 4

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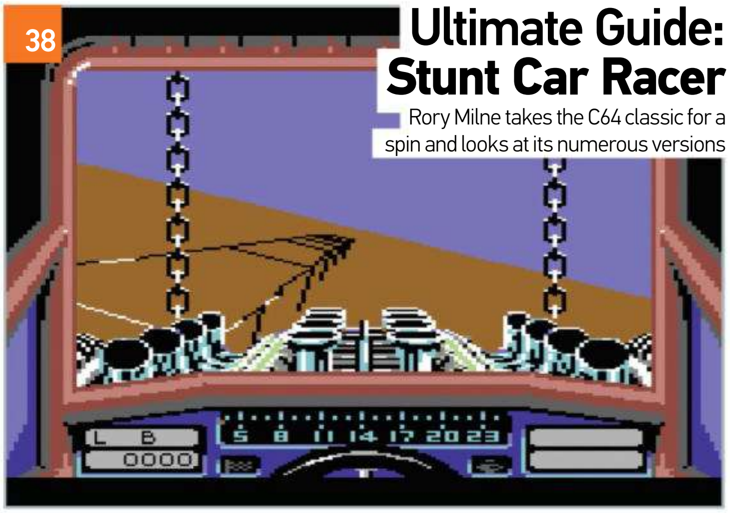

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Ultimate Guide: Stunt Car Racer
Rory Milne takes the C64 classic for a spin and looks at its numerous versions

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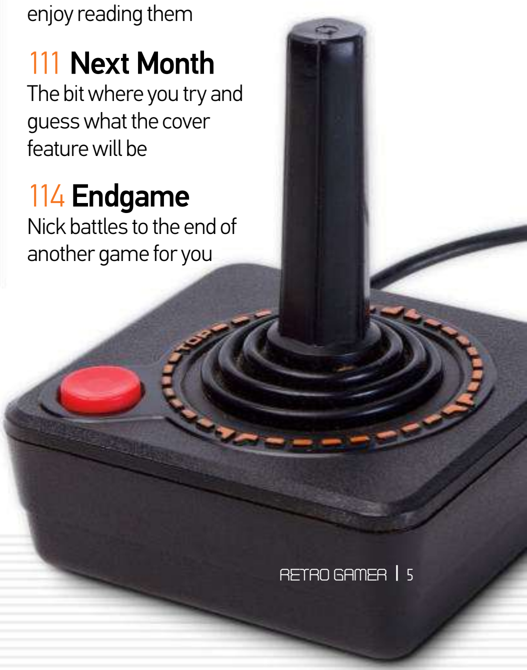

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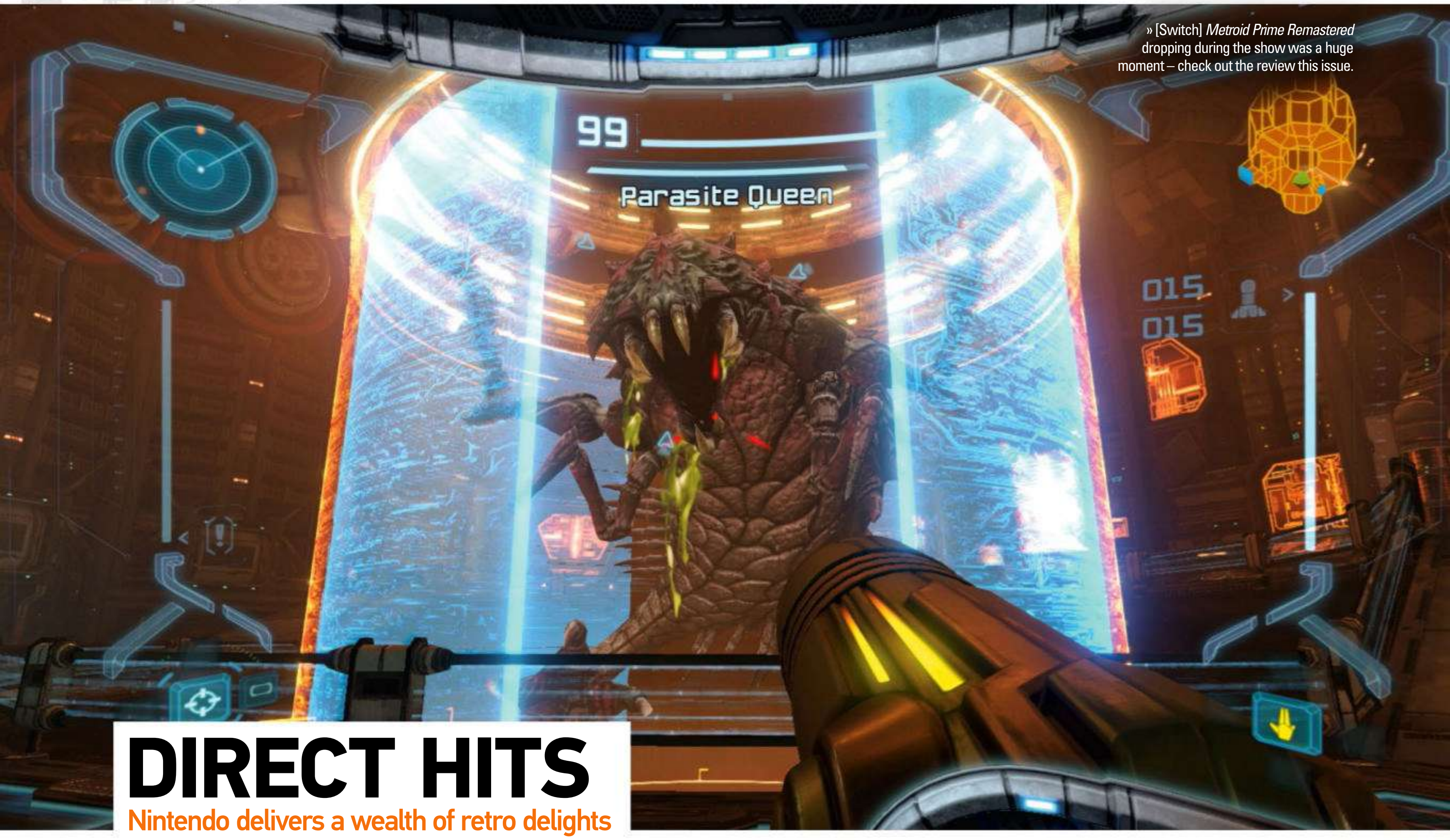

» [Switch] *Metroid Prime Remastered* dropping during the show was a huge moment – check out the review this issue.

DIRECT HITS

Nintendo delivers a wealth of retro delights

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All the latest retro news from Nintendo's most-recent Nintendo Direct presentation

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Do you have fond memories of the Acorn Electron? Iain's are a little different

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It's July 2006 and Nick is hard at work trying to avoid the 'that's not retro' police

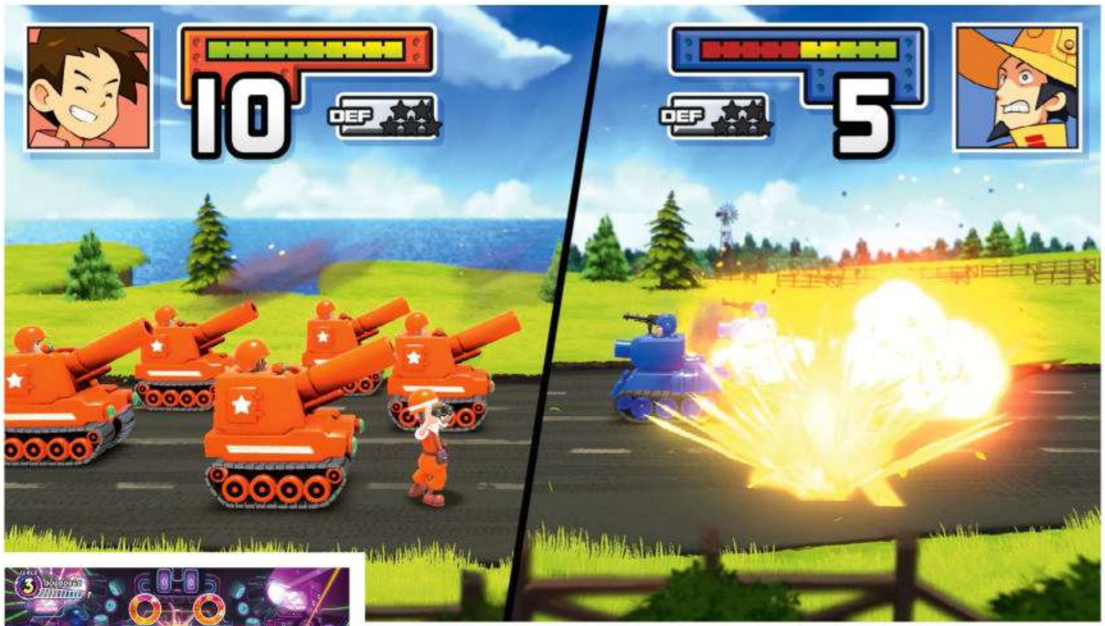
There's no denying the buzz that accompanies a Nintendo Direct – the company has nailed the formula for making them more than just video presentations, with big surprises and sudden releases that allow players to feel like part of an event. That's exactly what happened with the company's most recent outing, which had a feast of major announcements for fans of classic games. The biggest of the lot was undoubtedly the fact that *Metroid Prime Remastered*, a highly anticipated update of the classic first-person adventure, wasn't just being formally announced for the first time but would be available to buy immediately. You can check out our review of the reworked GameCube classic on page 96.

» [Switch] We really enjoyed Kirby's HD remaster. You'll find our review on page 94.

Kirby's Return To Dream Land Deluxe is also available now, with Nintendo highlighting the addition of Magolor Epilogue, a new mode in which you play as the character who is stranded in another dimension without most of his powers. *Advance Wars 1 + 2: Re-Boot Camp*, an upgraded collection of Intelligent Systems' classic turn-based strategy games that originally released on the Game Boy Advance, is now back on the release schedule. Previously due for release in early 2022 prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the game will now release on 21 April. The long-awaited *Pikmin 4* finally has a release date of 21 July, having first been mentioned by Shigeru Miyamoto way back in 2015, and we got a new trailer for *The Legend Of Zelda: Tears Of The Kingdom*, which is due for release on 12 May.

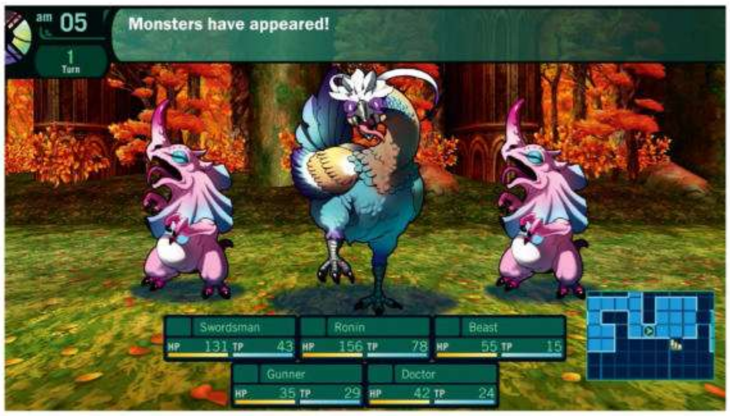
Bandai Namco brought a couple of interesting remaster projects of its own. The first is *Baten Kaitos: I & II HD Remaster*, which collects together the cult favourite GameCube card-battle RPGs *Baten Kaitos: Eternal Wings And The Lost Ocean* and *Baten Kaitos Origins*. As well as 1080p visuals, Namco has specified that the new versions will feature a stable 30fps performance, and will allow players to skip cutscenes, turn off enemy encounters or have them play out automatically. The English voice acting of the originals has been confirmed to be removed, however. The collection is due for release this summer.

The other project is *We Love Katamari Reroll + Royal Reverie*, a high-definition remaster of the sequel to *Katamari Damacy* which originally released for the PS2 in 2005. The sequel built on the first game with additional level objectives and multiplayer modes, and allowed players to play as both the Prince Of All Cosmos as well as the King Of All Cosmos, the latter in a story which explores his relationship with his stern father before he became king. This game is due to come out on 2 June, and will also be released for other major platforms. Two new systems joined the Nintendo



» [Switch] *Advance Wars* has been ready to go for over a year, delayed by terrible real events.

» [Switch] What is the genre of the *Katamari* series? Roll-'em-up? That sounds right.



» [Switch] The *Etrian Odyssey* games are so old-school, you have to map dungeons yourself.

Switch Online service, with the standard subscription tier getting Game Boy and Game Boy Color games. The initial line-up includes *Tetris*, *Super Mario Land 2*, *Metroid II*, *The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX* and *Kirby's Dream Land* among others, while games like *Kirby Tilt 'N' Tumble*, *Pokémon Trading Card Game* and *The Legend Of Zelda: Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons* are set to arrive in the future. Expansion pack subscribers also get Game Boy Advance Games, with *Mario Kart: Super Circuit*, *The Legend Of Zelda: The Minish Cap* and *WarioWare, Inc* among the initial selection, with *Metroid Fusion*, *Fire Emblem: The Blazing Blade*, *Golden Sun* and others set to join the service later on.

Samba De Amigo: Party Central is set for this summer, and brings Sega's rhythm game back to consoles for the first time since the Wii release in 2008. Controlled with the Joy-Cons, this new version offers a variety of modes including the online World Party mode and the Love Checker mode for couples. Atlus is bringing the first three of its decidedly old-school DS dungeon crawling RPGs together in *Etrian Odyssey Origins Collection*, due for release on 1 June. Also originating from the DS is Capcom's cult mystery puzzle game *Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective*, with a high-definition remaster for the Switch and other platforms allowing a whole new audience the chance to do some supernatural sleuthing this summer.

Tron: Identity is a narrative puzzle game set in the universe of the classic videogame-themed movie, which is set to launch on 11 April for Switch and PC. *Professor Layton And The New World Of Steam* was introduced with a short cinematic trailer, with the titular professor apparently back in action after having disappeared in the previous game in the series. *Dead Cells: Return To Castlevania* is a DLC package bringing the world of Konami's classic series into the modern Metroidvania hit, and should be available now across platforms. Speaking of Konami, *WBSC eBaseball: Power Pros* is also available now for a budget price on Switch and PS4, and is the first entry in the series to leave Japan in over a decade.

As always, we'll be keeping an eye on these games and you can expect to see reviews of many of them in future issues later in the year. ✱

» [Switch] The return of *Baten Kaitos* was an unexpected and thoroughly welcome surprise from the presentation.

IN MEMORY OF STEVE RIDING

We are saddened to learn that games-industry veteran Steve Riding passed away unexpectedly in February. Steve cofounded English Software in the early Eighties, working on games such as *Airstrike* for the Atari 8-bit computers, and briefly worked at Imagine Software before moving to MC Lothlorien where he worked on games such as *Legions Of Death* and *Nevermind*. Steve is best-known for his time at Psygnosis, where he rose to the position of director of external development over a decade at the company, earning credits on games such as *Mickey Mania*, *Toy Story* and *Formula 1* along the way. He later worked for Traveller's Tales, and was most recently the CEO of the VR-focussed studio Unexpected Developments.

Sarah and Martyn Chudley, who worked at *Formula 1* developer Bizarre Creations, paid tribute saying, "Steve was the ultimate in dedicated producers, one that any team was lucky to have – modestly supportive, unwaveringly generous, with a deadpan sense of humour and relaxed approach that calmed the development stresses and eased us all to success after success. We have lost an unsung industry legend and a good friend." Our condolences go out to Steve's friends and family.

Who is Iain Lee?
Iain Lee is a freelance counsellor who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. You can get more information about Iain by visiting iainleecounselling.com or heading over to patreon.com/iainandKatherine

The unpopular choice

I have written in the past about how in my middle school if you wanted to use the computers at lunchtime, you had to book it. At the beginning of the week, a piece of paper would be slapped on the door of the computer room and everyone would rush there at the start of breaktime on Monday to get their name up there. Boom. You had access to the BBC Model B.

I'd forgotten that there was an alternative for those who were too slow to get their names on that sacred parchment. Right down at the other end of the school, at the edge of the dining room and almost directly outside the headmaster's office, was the school's OTHER computer.

The Acorn Electron was a tiny, weird little cousin to the BBC. It had its own games and from what I remember, they were nothing special. It could play some BBC games, but usually at a much slower speed. So the Acorn Electron was not a popular choice. Partly because of the location, who wants to voluntarily sit outside the headmaster's office, but mainly because it was such a weird insubstantial machine.

It was hit and miss as to which BBC games would work on this magnolia shoebox. A real favourite of the time was a game called *Daredevil Dennis*. In the game, you played Dennis, a stuntman making a movie, and you had to jump over cars and houses and all kinds of things. On a scrolling platform, it would get more intense to the point where it was impossible. I think the best I had ever seen anyone do on the BBC was screen ten. Skills. When you tried it on the Electron, it seemed so sluggish that you could barely complete screen two. And yet for some reason, we kept loading it up, really hoping that this time we'd be able to play it. I don't know why. We just loved that game.

Oh! I've just remembered something else that made this a very unpopular choice of machine – you only got to connect it to the school black-and-white portable! Imagine that. Videogames in B&W. I wonder what would happen if I told my kids from now on they could only plug their Xbox into a black-and-white telly.

All in all, the Acorn was not a popular choice. But what else were you going to do? Go and play outside during lunch? You have to be kidding me.

I love the Electron. It's a strange overlooked machine. I don't know if there are any emulators out there. Why would there be? And collectors? I can't remember seeing someone's bedroom covered in Acorn memorabilia in the hallowed pages of **Retro Gamer**. If you are a collector, let me know. I'm actually hankering to get one on eBay and turn the colour down on the TV. Just need to recreate the cabbagey smell of school dinners and the constant fear that the head was going to come through his door at any moment. *

> "It was hit and miss as to which BBC games would work on this magnolia shoebox"

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Who is Paul Rose?
Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser.* These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

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Hooked on a feeling

I'm hooked on a couple of games at the minute which are only available on the Apple Arcade. Yes, I'm one of those people locked into the Apple ecosystem – and we can debate the pros and cons of that some other time. However, I am a big fan of the Apple Arcade subscription service. It's only a fiver a month, and all of the games available under the Apple Arcade banner are accessible. And some of those games are very, very good.

The first of the two that are currently consuming my life is *Squiggle Drop*. It's kind of a cross between *WarioWare* and *Scribblenauts*; you're presented with a series of rapid-fire challenges, and must doodle a shape on the screen that will complete the puzzle. The other is called *Castle Crumble*, and it's basically a 3D *Angry Birds* clone (notably, *Angry Birds* itself is also available on Apple Arcade).

Not all the games on there are major releases – there are a lot of 'casual' games – but some of them are what might've once been considered AAA games. I was realising this when playing *Squiggle Drop* in bed the other night. If a game like that had been released on my Spectrum when I was a kid it would've been top reviewed in all the magazines – maybe even with a cover feature. It would've cost me more than a month's pocket money, and I'd have made sure I wrung every last bit of gameplay out of it. We'd all be remembering it fondly, and it'd probably be included in one of those Best ZX Spectrum Games lists.

Now, a game like *Squiggle Drop* is barely known. It's overshadowed by other, bigger, games, almost an afterthought on the gaming landscape, stuffed alongside a bunch of other games that you can access for a modest fee. It deserves better, because in its own, quiet, understated way, it's borderline genius.

The big, tent pole, games of my youth – *Lunar Jetpac*, *Jet Set Willy*, *Skool Daze*… iconic games you will all have heard of, yet there are unknown equivalents to all of those on the Apple Arcade, which are usually better than their inspiration. Even something as epic as *Elite* has dozens of mobile platform imitators that have barely registered on the wider gaming landscape. Heck, one of my favourite games of last year was the little-known *Sneaky Sasquatch*; it features a skiing section that's pure *Horace Goes Skiing*, but it's only a tiny part of a much, much, larger game.

So, what am I saying? I'm not sure really. I mean, it's progress innit? We all like to moan and complain, and yes we're sitting atop a landfill full of 50 years of gaming history. We can't play everything, but we're also living in a golden time, where every whim and gaming peccadillo is catered for. I suppose I would just implore everyone – particularly those of you with memories of Eighties and early Nineties gaming – to look a bit further, to dig a bit deeper, than what we're told are the must-have games of today. Today's casual games are often the AAA releases of yesteryear. *

> "Even something as epic as Elite has dozens of mobile platform imitators that have barely registered on the wider gaming landscape"

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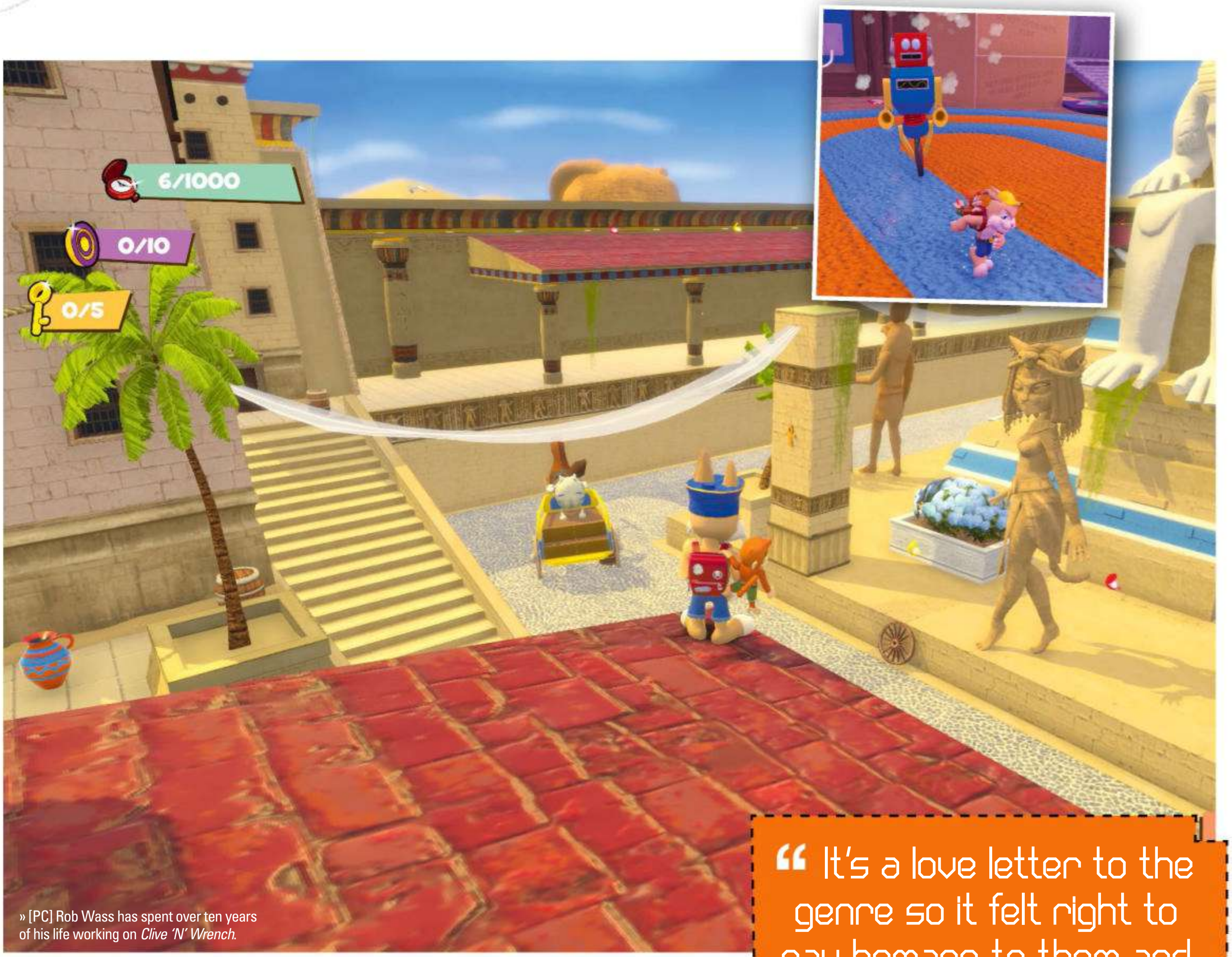


» [PC] Rob Wass has spent over ten years of his life working on *Clive 'N' Wrench*.

Clive 'N' Wrench

We chat to Rob Wass about his brand-new platformer which is inspired by the 3D classics of yesteryear

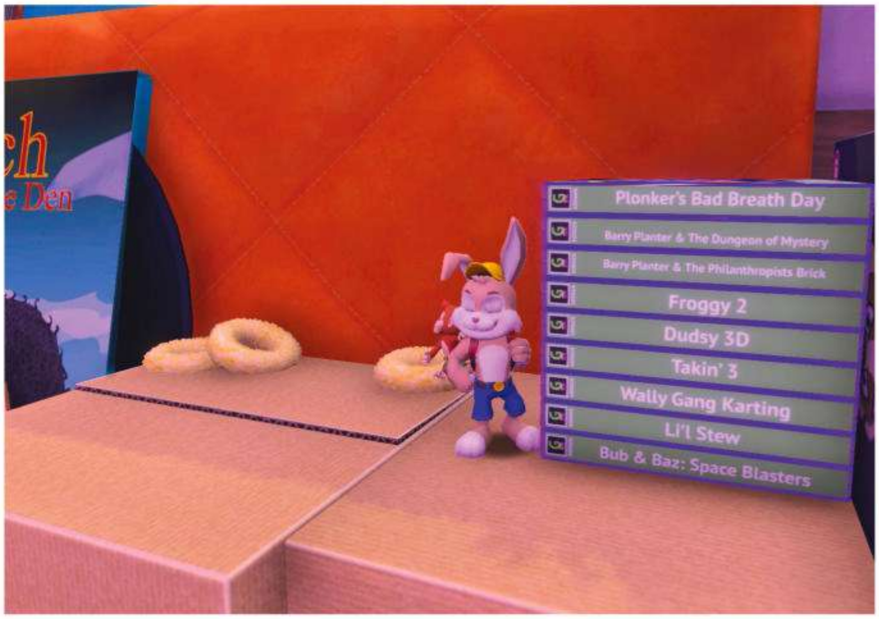
Sometimes you just have to wait until things are ready and that's exactly why Rob Wass has spent over ten years developing *Clive 'N' Wrench*. The retro-inspired 3D platformer is hotly anticipated by fans that have followed the project and we speak to Rob about his experience getting it ready for release.

How did your journey to create a classic 3D platformer start?
3D platformers have always been my favourite genre, but back in 2011, it seemed that the genre was dead. I figured I couldn't be alone in that feeling and made a YouTube video discussing this. The response was positive and sparked a thought process within me. I felt that if nobody else is doing it then maybe I could. By the time I actually finished, over a decade later, the genre had already been resurrected, but at least in one way, I was ahead of that curve.

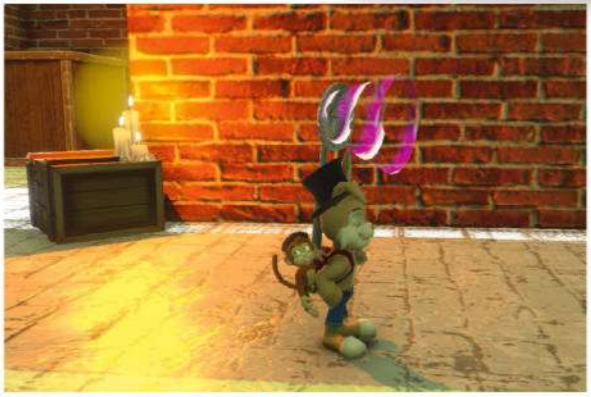
Why has it taken so long for *Clive 'N' Wrench* to be released?
When I started, I didn't think I'd see it through to completion, it was just an experiment and a challenge to see what I could do. I've worked with several freelance coders and voice actors over the years, but the lion's share of the work has all been on my shoulders. Once I did start taking it more seriously, I had a day job and less free time. Over the last couple of years, I've been running a Patreon which, when combined with my own savings, allowed me to quit my job and work on *Clive 'N' Wrench* full time.

> " It's a love letter to the genre so it felt right to pay homage to them and remind players of what came before "
>
> **ROB WASS**

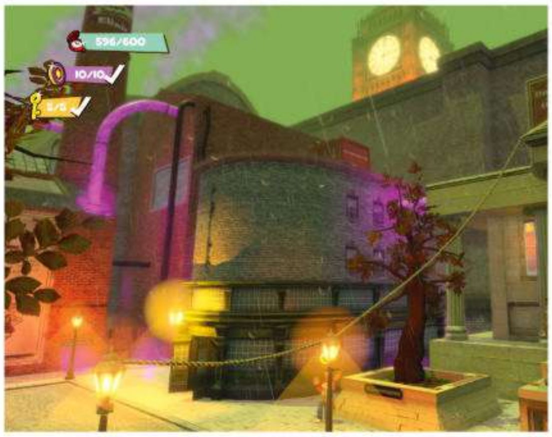
What influenced you and how did you implement the ideas?
There's not one 3D platformer that hasn't influenced the game, but the main ones are *Spyro*, *Jak & Daxter*, *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Muppet Monster Adventure*. Although, things like the level design in *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, the open-ended structure of *Grand Theft Auto* or the light humour in *MediEvil* have also influenced me. As for implementation, I slowly built ideas on top of the game's skeleton, seeing what worked and then removing what didn't.


Ponker's Bad Breath Day
Barry Planter & The Dungeon of Mystery
Barry Planter & The Philanthropists Brick
Froggy 2
Dudsy 3D
Takin' 3
Wally Gang Karting
Li'l Stew
Bub & Baz: Space Blasters

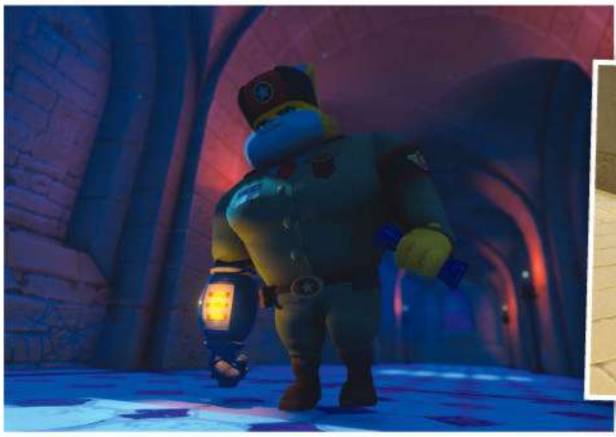
» [PC] You will find many Easter eggs spread throughout *Clive 'N' Wrench*.



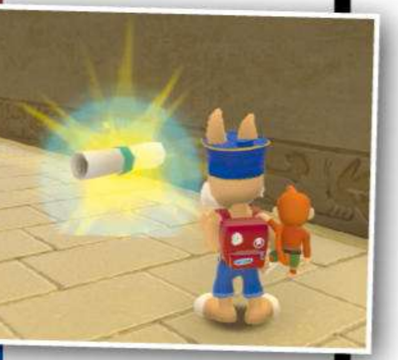
» [PC] The Watchfinder Radar points you in the direction of items to collect.



» [PC] Each level has a set theme that takes inspiration from the real world.



» [PC] General Olga Chestycough is just one of the many bosses you will face.



» [PC] Finding the secret scrolls will help give you clues that aid your journey.

Why do so many Easter eggs from other games appear in *Clive 'N' Wrench*?
It's a love letter to the genre so it felt right to pay homage to them and remind players of what came before. Also, many of the references double up as world-building or storytelling elements. Even brand-new players, unfamiliar with older games, should still get something out of the Easter eggs.

How did you get the controls so precise?
Controls were definitely the aspect I iterated upon the most. The actual core mechanic is based on Unity's physics engine, so things like gravity works as you'd expect. I just sped the system up for a more cartoony feel. Also, Clive's movement state machine, which are the rules that govern animation, is massive and complex. This goes a long way to helping the controls feel responsive no matter how complicated your combination of moves may be.

How did Trowzer from *Yooka-Laylee* end up in the game?
I definitely owe Daley at Playtonic for that one! She and I were Twitter mutuals for some time, which eventually led to me asking if she'd voice a character. She suggested that we could have a crossover between the two worlds, which of course I jumped at. After a few messages between studios, we found the right character to use that hopefully fans of both games will get a kick from.

You've given players every move from the get-go, which is unusual, so why do this?
Something that's always a big frustration is going back to a game I've got years of muscle memory for only to be reminded that I can't use a lot of it until I pass all the tutorials. So, for *Clive 'N' Wrench*, it was designed so that brand-new players have slightly easier moves, but with lesser rewards, and veterans of the genre can use the advanced stuff to progress faster and find all the secrets.

Why do 3D platformers remain such a loved genre?
Platformers are the purest experience a game can offer because it's you taking full control of a character, navigating an environment and discovering things. Their open-ended nature means that none are alike and even if you've played one you've certainly not played them all. Also, games these days strive for realism and it's refreshing to run around a fantasy world as a cartoon dragon or an undead skeletal knight for a while.

How do you feel now it's being released?
In a word, surreal! Crazy to think my experience, of going into a game shop with my parents to buy a PlayStation game, is something that my game might give to somebody today. That's coupled with a crippling sense of self-doubt, asking yourself if people will like it, but I don't think there's any way of escaping that, or my own impostor syndrome. *

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

JULY 2006 – All the E3 reactions have arrived this month, and it's a big show with major hardware on the way. Nick Thorpe took time out of a trip to see ancient Japan's oversized crustaceans to gather up all the old news you could want

NEWS JULY 2006

Italy defeated France in the final of the 2006 World Cup, which was held at the Olympiastadion in Berlin, Germany on 9 July. The French had actually taken the lead after just seven minutes when Zinedine Zidane scored a penalty, but Marco Materazzi equalised 12 minutes later. The two players clashed in extra time, with Zidane sent off for head-butting Materazzi in the chest, before Italy claimed a 5-3 victory in a penalty shoot-out.

The final regular episode of *Top Of The Pops* aired on 30 July, ending a continuous run that had begun in January 1964. Although the show was the longest-running weekly music show, its viewership had declined from a peak of 19 million viewers in 1979 to under 1.5 million following a move to BBC2 in 2005. Snow Patrol was the last live act on the show, performing *Chasing Cars*.

On 31 July, Cuban president Fidel Castro announced that his duties would temporarily be delegated to his brother Raul Castro, due to ill health. The divisive leader had been in power continuously since 1959, having established the Communist Party as the sole party of government, and was the world's longest-serving non-royal head of government at the time.

» Say what you like about the Sixaxis, at least it wasn't the boomerang.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM JULY 2006

The magazines filed their reports from E3, and there was certainly plenty to discuss. Sony's showing was "widely accepted as an underwhelming media event" according to *Edge*, with online commentators making memes of the flat reaction to a PSP running *Ridge Racer*, the PlayStation 3's $599 American price tag, and the realism and historical accuracy of *Genji 2*'s giant enemy crab. *Play* felt that the PS3 was "the most impressive piece of consumer electronics hardware ever created", but its assessment of £425 as "a remarkably cheap price tag" was perhaps out of step with public opinion. The new Sixaxis controller did away with rumble capabilities and included motion control, which *games™* felt could be "seen as an unwise move". The magazine did believe that the games showcased "all looked significantly better" than existing Xbox 360 games, but questioned "whether or not that's all CG lies" and concluded "if Sony is to catch up with Microsoft, there's a lot of work to do". Key titles shown included *Final Fantasy XIII*, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Resistance: Fall Of Man* and the multiformat *Assassin's Creed*.

» [PS3] *Metal Gear Solid 4* looked set to offer the lengthy dialogue scenes fans were craving.

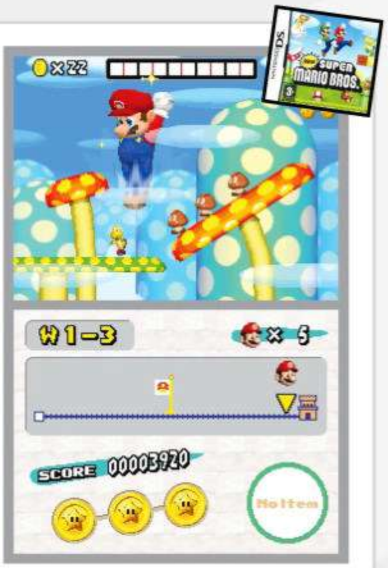
The Wii turned a lot of heads at the show, with the motion-controlled fun of *Wii Sports* showing the potential broad appeal of the machine, while games such as *Super Mario Galaxy*, *The Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess* and *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption* reassured hardened fans. *Official Nintendo Magazine* bullishly declared that Nintendo had "emerged victorious" from E3, with "games and hardware that look set to redefine gaming". That may have been expected but even less partisan publications were highly impressed, as *games™* noted that the confidence of some of the company's most influential figureheads "suggests that they know they have something special". *Edge* noted that the "flair and theatre" of the show "did a good job of disguising the fact that third-party support is currently rather thin".

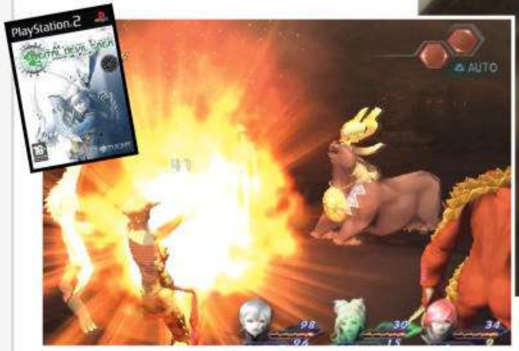
As for Microsoft, it was "building on concretes, not promises" in *Edge*'s words, a fact reinforced by the company's claim that five million Xbox 360s were already in homes and that it expected to double that figure by the November launch of the PS3. The company instead had to rely on big games and it had some of the biggest, with *games™* remarking that "without showing any genuine gameplay footage […] *Halo 3* stole the entire conference" via an in-engine demo. It was also announced that *Grand Theft Auto IV* would be available on Xbox 360 from day one, which *X-360* felt was a "genuine victory for Microsoft in a time when many thought *GTA* would be a big part of the PS3's launch arsenal". *Gears Of War* also managed to draw a lot of attention, and coupled with new add-ons including a drive for HD-DVD movies, *games™* felt that the company's showing was "indisputably impressive".

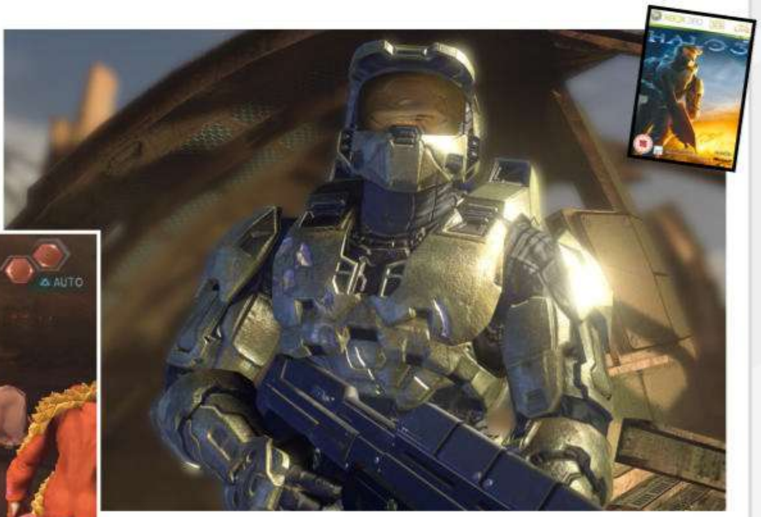
With all the hype around the future of gaming, it's a wonder anyone had time for new games. Thankfully, publishers were aware of this problem and chose to release relatively few games of note this month. The biggest hitter was undoubtedly *New Super Mario Bros*, the DS game that brought back 2D *Mario* platforming for the first time in over a decade. *Official Nintendo Magazine* felt that it was "endlessly addictive with as much of that one-more-go appeal as Mario's old-time classics", and gave the game 96%, while *games™* gave it 8/10, feeling that the game design was so brilliant that it was "a near travesty that the whole thing is so short".

On the PS2, *Play* gave *Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga* 86%, recommending it to fans of Japanese RPGs who were interested in "something that eschews many of the clichés", but *games™* gave it 5/10 for being uneven, citing an interesting but slow to develop plot. *X-360* liked *Moto GP 06*, praising its "intense racing atmosphere" in an 8/10 review, while *games™* was impressed but scored it 7/10 as its racing was "very unforgiving".

Join us once again next month, as hardware is stockpiled for the console clash to come. *


» [DS] Mega Mario is bigger than Super Mario. Should Nintendo be making that comparison?


» [PS2] This game's sequel came out in America in October 2005. Wasn't European gaming great?


» [Xbox 360] Microsoft asked Master Chief to polish his armour for the special event, and he obliged.

CHARTS

JULY 2006

PLAYSTATION 2

1 – The Da Vinci Code (2K Games)
2 – 2006 FIFA World Cup (EA)
3 – Tomb Raider: Legend (Eidos)
4 – The Godfather (EA)
5 – Buzz!: The Big Quiz (Sony)

PSP

1 – 2006 FIFA World Cup (EA)
2 – Monster Hunter: Freedom (Capcom)
3 – Pro Evolution Soccer 5 (Konami)
4 – SOCOM: US Navy SEALs (Sony)
5 – Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories (Rockstar)

DS

1 – Animal Crossing: Wild World (Nintendo)
2 – Metroid Prime: Hunters (Nintendo)
3 – Trauma Center: Under The Knife (Nintendo)
4 – Pokémon Link (Nintendo)
5 – Nintendogs: Lab & Friends (Nintendo)

MUSIC

1 – Smile (Lily Allen)
2 – Hips Don't Lie (Shakira ft. Wyclef Jean)
3 – Voodoo Child (Rogue Traders)
4 – Maneater (Nelly Furtado)
5 – I Wish I Was A Punk Rocker (Sandi Thom)

THIS MONTH IN…

Play

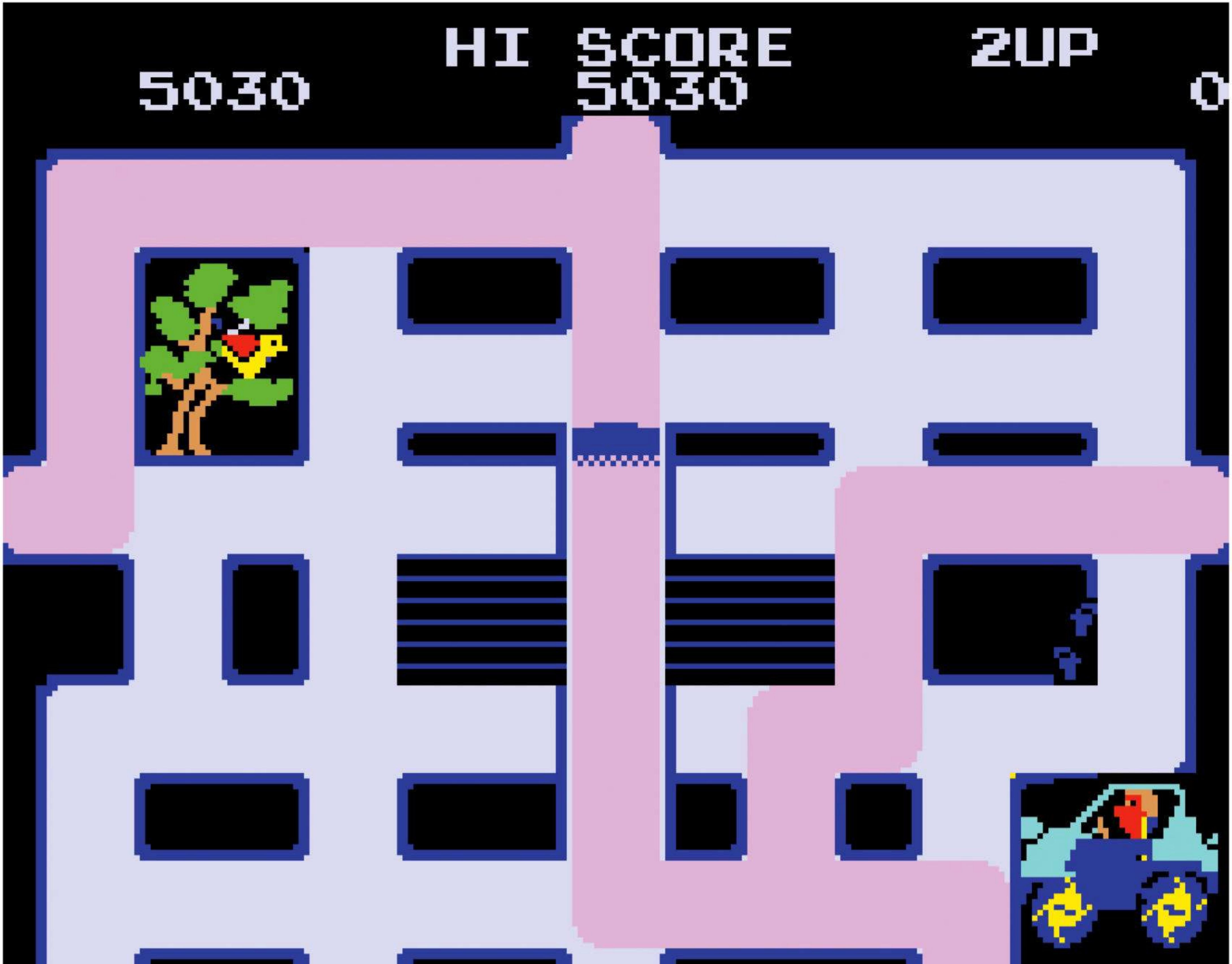
How does Tim feel about Sony's E3? "*Gran Turismo* can piss right off, I'm so sick of those games and shinier graphics aren't going to make me want to play it. Unless they add guns." He does fancy *Final Fantasy XIII* though.

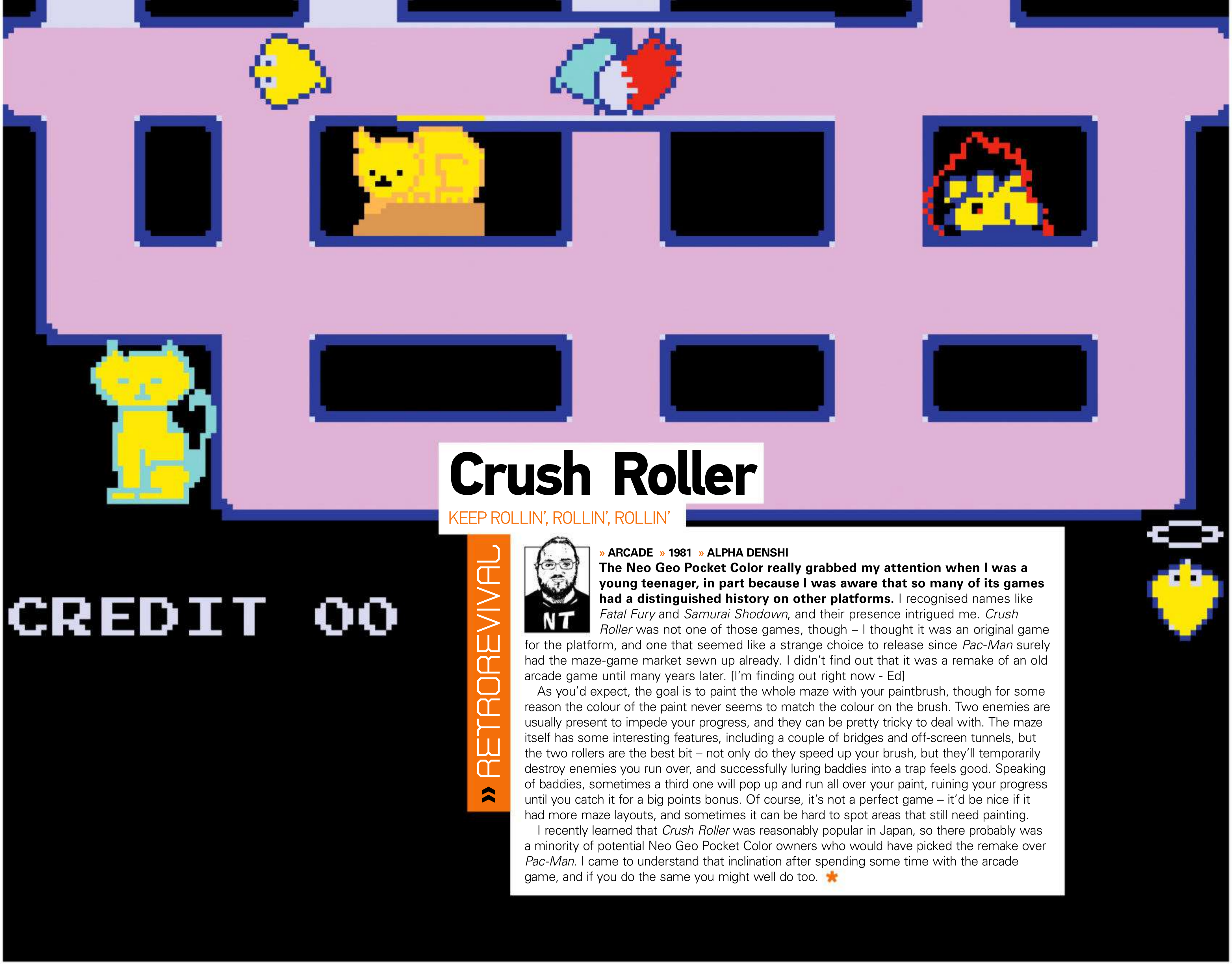
Edge

"Their technology solution is a little better than the GameCube," says Sony's Phil Harrison of the Wii. "The big question is whether having only an unusual controller is going to be attractive to both designers and players."

Official Nintendo Magazine

"Airplane's a bit different as the remote's movements are mirrored," says *ONM*'s *Wii Sports* preview. Don't remember that bit? Your memory's fine, it was canned before launch.


HI SCORE
5030
5030
2UP
0



Crush Roller

KEEP ROLLIN', ROLLIN', ROLLIN'

» ARCADE » 1981 » ALPHA DENSHI

The Neo Geo Pocket Color really grabbed my attention when I was a young teenager, in part because I was aware that so many of its games had a distinguished history on other platforms. I recognised names like *Fatal Fury* and *Samurai Shodown*, and their presence intrigued me. *Crush Roller* was not one of those games, though – I thought it was an original game for the platform, and one that seemed like a strange choice to release since *Pac-Man* surely had the maze-game market sewn up already. I didn't find out that it was a remake of an old arcade game until many years later. [I'm finding out right now - Ed]

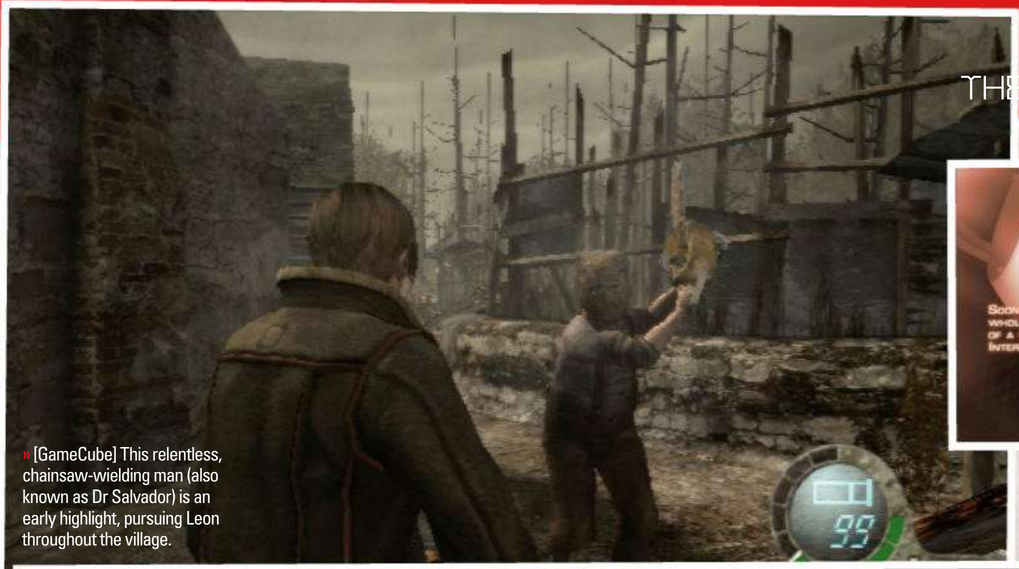
As you'd expect, the goal is to paint the whole maze with your paintbrush, though for some reason the colour of the paint never seems to match the colour on the brush. Two enemies are usually present to impede your progress, and they can be pretty tricky to deal with. The maze itself has some interesting features, including a couple of bridges and off-screen tunnels, but the two rollers are the best bit – not only do they speed up your brush, but they'll temporarily destroy enemies you run over, and successfully luring baddies into a trap feels good. Speaking of baddies, sometimes a third one will pop up and run all over your paint, ruining your progress until you catch it for a big points bonus. Of course, it's not a perfect game – it'd be nice if it had more maze layouts, and sometimes it can be hard to spot areas that still need painting.

I recently learned that *Crush Roller* was reasonably popular in Japan, so there probably was a minority of potential Neo Geo Pocket Color owners who would have picked the remake over *Pac-Man*. I came to understand that inclination after spending some time with the arcade game, and if you do the same you might well do too. *

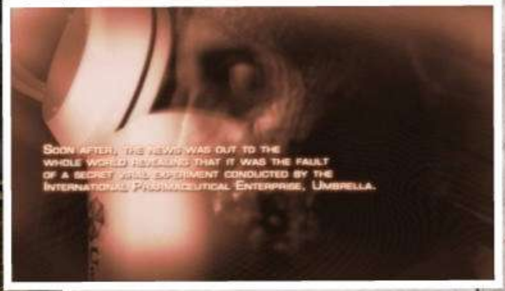
THE IMPACT OF
RESIDENT EVIL 4

WHILE THERE HAD BEEN A HANDFUL OF INNOVATIONS DURING ITS FIRST THREE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED GAMES, THE CORE GAMEPLAY OF THE MAIN RESIDENT EVIL SERIES HAD REMAINED BROADLY THE SAME BY THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. AS THE NEW MILLENNIUM DAWNED, IT WAS TIME FOR A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE THAT WOULD COME TO REDEFINE THE SERIES FOREVER

WORDS BY GRAEME MASON

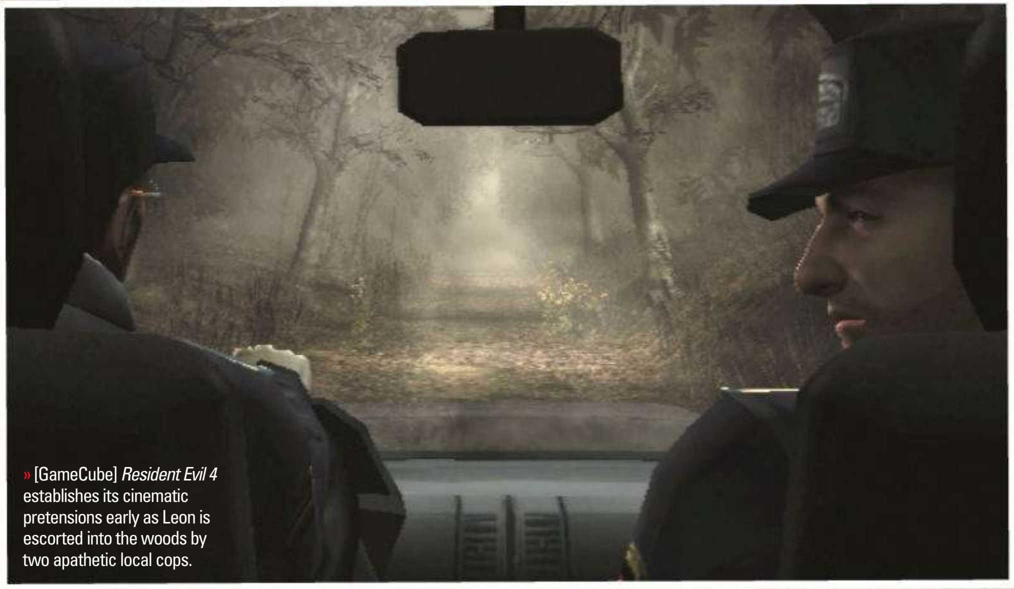


» [GameCube] This relentless, chainsaw-wielding man (also known as Dr Salvador) is an early highlight, pursuing Leon throughout the village.



Soon after, the news was out to the whole world revealing that it was the fault of a secret viral experiment conducted by the International Pharmaceutical Enterprise, Umbrella.

» [GameCube] *Resident Evil 4*'s intro briefly recaps the events of the earlier games.



» [GameCube] *Resident Evil 4* establishes its cinematic pretensions early as Leon is escorted into the woods by two apathetic local cops.

Whether you're a fan of the series or not, there's undoubtedly no argument that *Resident Evil* helped redefine videogames in the mid-Nineties and propelled the Sony PlayStation into a more mature demographic. Open and tense locations, limited ammunition, a mysterious corporation, oblique puzzles and, of course, those shambling undead corpses all contributed massively to a successful regeneration of the survival horror genre. And back in 1996, we didn't seem to mind the tank controls and those painful door animations. This was a frightening experience like no other. "I remember walking into a lot of walls!" smiles Alex Moore, designer on Firesprite's brutal VR survival horror game, *The Persistence*. "The controls and camera suited the game at the time, but they were a high skill floor for players to learn."

> "THE CONTROLS AND CAMERA SUITED THE GAME AT THE TIME, BUT THEY WERE A HIGH SKILL FLOOR FOR PLAYERS TO LEARN"
>
> **ALEX MOORE**

While it retained the tank controls and pre-rendered backdrops, *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* included a few nods to a new direction. Much of the original game's anxious skulking of tight corridors was gone, as was the laborious trudging across the map to find a specific item. Instead, we got the mutated Nemesis, stalking Jill Valentine with a rough gargled exhortation of "STARS" as the series took a notable move towards action-based gameplay. Then, with further advances arriving with the Sega Dreamcast game *Resident Evil – Code: Veronica* in 2000, Capcom's decision to publish a remake of the original game on the Nintendo GameCube pointed the way to a new beginning.

"Looking at *Resident Evil* now, I think it's earned its place in gaming history," says Alex Aniel, author of *Itchy, Tasty: The Unofficial History Of Resident Evil*. "But it was superseded by the legendary GameCube remake."

Yet despite its status today, the GameCube remake of *Resident Evil*, and its companion, *Resident Evil Zero*, were disappointing sellers for Capcom, the exclusivity to the Nintendo console harming it in the face of the incredible success of the PlayStation 2. As Alex Aniel notes in *Itchy, Tasty*, "It is likely that there would have been a drop, albeit smaller, on PlayStation 2 as well. By the time *Resident Evil Zero* was released, ▶

ALEX MOORE

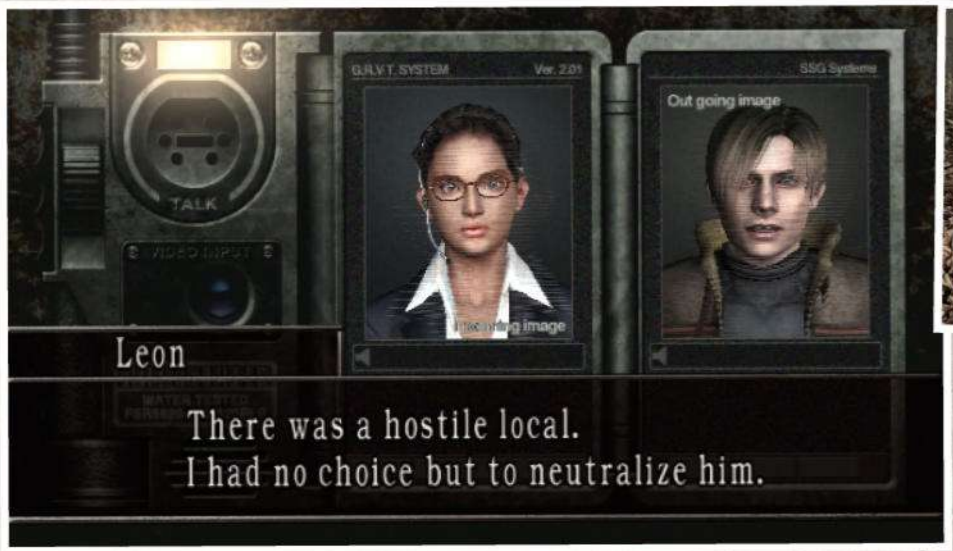
» Firesprite's *The Persistence* takes certain qualities from *Resident Evil 4* and Alex was its lead designer.

ALEX ANIEL

» The author of *Itchy, Tasty: An Unofficial History Of Resident Evil* is a huge fan of *Resident Evil 4*.

CHUCK BEAVER

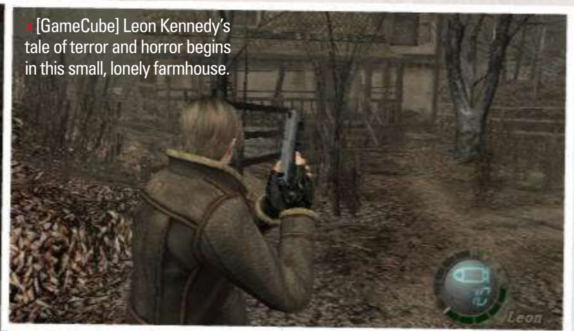
» *Dead Space*'s similarities to *Resident Evil 4* aren't just coincidental, as Chuck Beaver explains to us.



Leon

There was a hostile local.
I had no choice but to neutralize him.

» [GameCube] Leon keeps in contact with his base via this hi-tech radio – until it gets jacked by Ramón Salazar and Los Illuminados' leader Osmund Saddler.


» [GameCube] Leon Kennedy's tale of terror and horror begins in this small, lonely farmhouse.

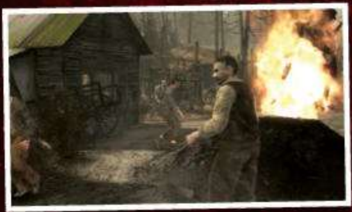
there were already various discussions in progress about the viability of the old *Resident Evil* gameplay formula, which had not evolved dramatically since 1996." With *Grand Theft Auto*, *Halo* and Capcom's *Devil May Cry* all changing the gaming landscape in their own way, the *Resident Evil* series was starting to look quaint and old-fashioned in comparison. *Devil May Cry* had actually begun life as *Resident Evil 4* before Capcom changed tack, feeling that the game had strayed too far away from the *Resident Evil* formula.

Starting afresh in 2001, *Resident Evil 4* formed part of The Capcom Five, a quintet of games announced for the console on 14 November 2002. Undeterred by the relatively poor performance of the remake and *Zero*, the plan was to release all five games exclusively on the Nintendo GameCube. There are significant indicators in *Resident Evil 4*'s 80-second trailer here that this would be something quite different from the previous games. The flowing locks of a youthful Leon Kennedy take centre stage as he paces through dynamic dark corridors, stalked by a smoky black presence. The constantly shifting backgrounds and a camera diligently floating behind Leon betrays a new direction for the series. Despite several technical and story-related issues – a trailer from 2003 with Leon encountering a terrifying figure armed with a hook, was ultimately scrapped due to the GameCube's limitations – *Resident Evil 4*'s (almost) final version was ready to stun the world in 2004.

The scene was Capcom's Gamers' Day event in Las Vegas on the 28 January. *Resident Evil 4*'s previous two trailers had revealed a new direction and an adherence to the old-school horror tropes for which the series had become famed. Now, all expectations were shattered as Capcom displayed its latest trailer and a playable demo.

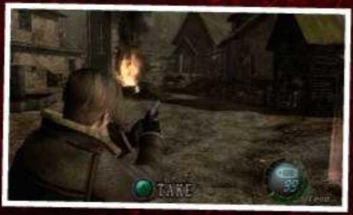
It was a dramatic new face for survival horror. Former Raccoon Police Department officer Leon Kennedy is now part of a government task force assigned to eliminate the threat of the nefarious corporation, Umbrella. With most of its agents under investigation, Leon is dispatched to Spain to investigate the kidnapping of the president's daughter, Ashley Graham. The 2004 trailer begins with the agent pacing cautiously through a dark rural area, gun ready in anticipation of trouble. Lightning arcs downwards, lighting the scene; it is the dingy village from the finished game's opening. Villagers menace Leon as the captions tease an apocalyptic scenario and boast that, "New camera angles put you right in the

THE EVOLUTION OF



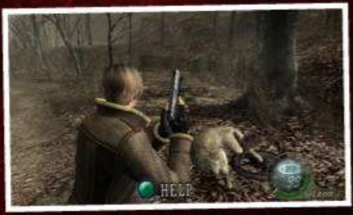
DIE HARD IN A VILLAGE

■ While some lamented the loss of the slow-burn gameplay and endless trudging around of *Resident Evil*, the new fast-paced action of *Resident Evil 4* helped cement its legendary status. Enemies constantly assault Leon with thrilling cutscenes amplifying the action further.



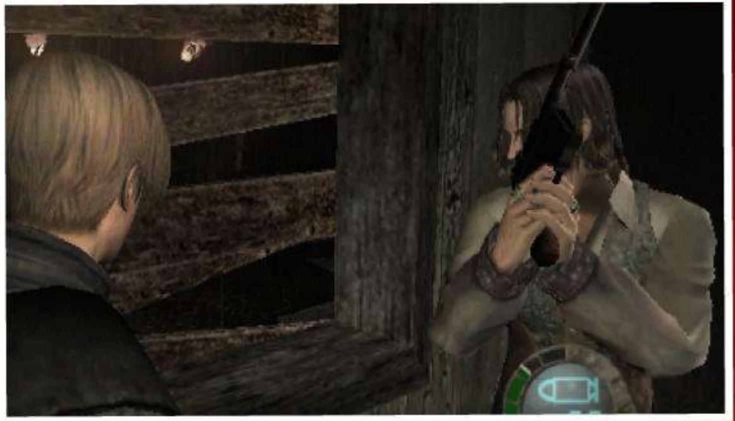
A BRAND-NEW VIEWPOINT

■ Looking back, it's a wonder that the over-the-shoulder camera hadn't been popularised before *Resident Evil 4*. Offering a clearer view of the player's surroundings and superior immersion, it revolutionised third-person games more than anything else in the Capcom series.



DECISIONS, DECISIONS

■ Although critical decisions were included in *Resident Evil 3*, they never really had the impact of those present in the next game. Free the dog from the trap; take an easy or hard path; hide Ashley or keep her close – *Resident Evil 4* constantly asks these important questions.

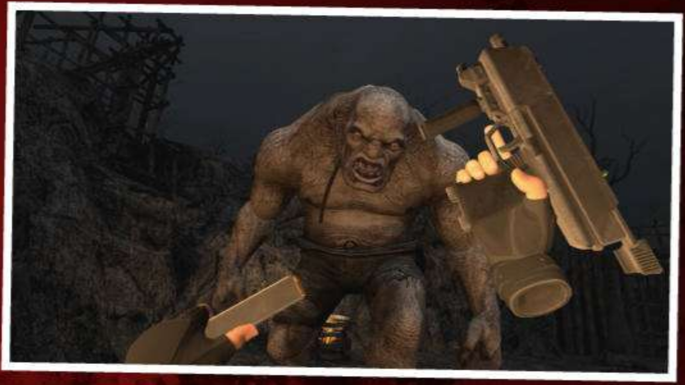


» [GameCube] Leon and ex-Los Illuminados biologist Luis prepare to defend against an onslaught of Ganado.

action." Real-time actions are presented with a cinematic sheen as Leon jumps theatrically from a window and over fences; giant boss monsters appear, menacing the hero as he optimistically plugs away with his handgun. The camera sits behind Leon all the time, following his movements as the antagonists, a world away from lumbering zombies, dodge and attack. As the trailer succinctly claims, it will be, "One hell of an intense story."

Resident Evil 4 formed one half of a dual-cover release of the March 2004 issue of *Game Informer* magazine, the subtitle screaming "The shocking new face of survival horror". "[When] the news broke in *Game Informer*, I was stunned, to say the least," remembers Alex Aniel. "[It was] a complete 180-degrees on a formula that had been in place for close to a decade at that point. We all knew *Resident Evil 4* would be something different and fresh – but we were expecting that in a horror context, not an action one." Gone was the haunted castle, hallucinations, zombies and ominous black smoke of the previous trailers. Instead, the most human-like enemies of the *Resident Evil* franchise to ▶

> "WE ALL KNEW RESIDENT EVIL 4 WOULD BE SOMETHING DIFFERENT AND FRESH BUT WE WERE EXPECTING THAT IN A HORROR CONTEXT, NOT AN ACTION ONE"
> **ALEX ANIEL**



HORROR HAS A NEW FORM

RESI 4'S VIRTUAL REALITY MAKEOVER

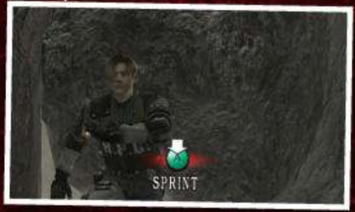
If you need further proof of *Resident Evil 4*'s brilliance you should really consider experiencing it in VR. Boasting a brand-new first-person perspective and developed exclusively for Oculus Quest 2, *Resi 4 VR* is mind-blowingly good fun and not only transforms the original game's many fantastic setpieces thanks to the new first-person viewpoint, but often transcends them due to the deep immersion that VR offers.

Being surrounded by villagers while being chased by Dr Salvador is even more frightening when you can see your enemies all around you, while the added scale that VR offers means that many of the boss encounters become truly transformative affairs. And don't go thinking this is just some cutdown version of the game, as Armature Studio has delivered the full adventure with only Assignment Ada and a few of the more problematic conversations with Ashley being cut out. Armature even added The Mercenaries as a free update, so there's plenty to keep you busy once the main quest is completed.

While it has to make a few concessions here and there to suit the new first-person viewpoint, Armature's slavish attention to the source material and excellent comfort options ensure that *Resident Evil 4 VR* is an absolute triumph and something that no self-respecting fan of the series should miss.

RESIDENT EVIL 4

FEW ESTABLISHED FRANCHISES HAVE ENJOYED AS SIGNIFICANT A CHANGE AS THOSE IN RESIDENT EVIL 4

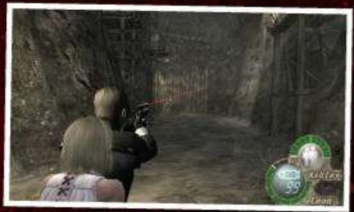


PRESS THE RIGHT BUTTON OR DIE

■ The QTE, a staple of Noughties gaming, continues to polarise gamers to this day. Essentially a method of involving the player in story-focussed cutscenes, *Resident Evil 4* ramps up these button-mashing commands, culminating in a tense face-off with evil mercenary Jack Krauser.

EXHILARATING SETPIECES

■ From that very first building where Leon can acrobatically jump out of its first-floor window, *Resident Evil 4* provides stirring little asides. Whether Leon is pushing down enemy-laden ladders, jumping from roofs or kicking in doors, excitement is never far away in this game.



PRECISION AIMING

■ Free from the fixed camera and vague shooting mechanics of the original games, *Resident Evil 4* introduces innovative precision aiming with a laser sight, perfectly showing the player where they are aiming. A version of this appears in many third-person shooters today.

OW! THAT'S MY KNEE!

■ A corollary of precise aiming is the ability to target an enemy's specific body parts. For example, headshots do significantly more damage, while shooting a Ganado's leg has them hopping around in agony. Other games had done this, but none quite as gloriously as *Resident Evil 4*.

CONVERSION CAPERS

RETRO GAMER TAKES A FEARFUL PEEK AT ALL THE MAIN VERSIONS OF RESIDENT EVIL 4

GAMECUBE

■ With reported sales of over 1.5 million, comfortably eclipsing the 2002 *Resident Evil* remake and *Zero*, *Resident Evil 4* remains one of the GameCube's biggest third-party games. It also helped banish Nintendo's reputation for a younger demographic and tested the console to its limits. The unlockables, Assignment Ada and The Mercenaries complete an excellent package.

PLAYSTATION 2

■ As with the GameCube original from a few months earlier, Capcom pushed the Sony console to its limits, making a few minor sacrifices to maintain the game's impressive framerate. By far, the biggest bonus for owners of the PlayStation 2 was Separate Ways, an expanded mission with the mysterious Ada Wong. Oh, and no disc swapping.

PC

■ Released, somewhat apologetically, two years after the original GameCube game, the PC version of *Resident Evil 4* at least includes all the bonus items from the PlayStation 2 game. Otherwise, the most significant addition is a new Easy skill level and good support for widescreen resolutions, with publication taken care of by Ubisoft outside of Japan.

WII

■ Capcom adapted its hit game to the latest Nintendo console in 2007, incorporating controller point aiming and a slash attack with Leon's knife, vastly improving the rather clumsy original control method. This version also includes the extras from the PlayStation 2 game and is acknowledged by many fans as the definitive version of the Capcom classic.

XBOX 360/PLAYSTATION 3

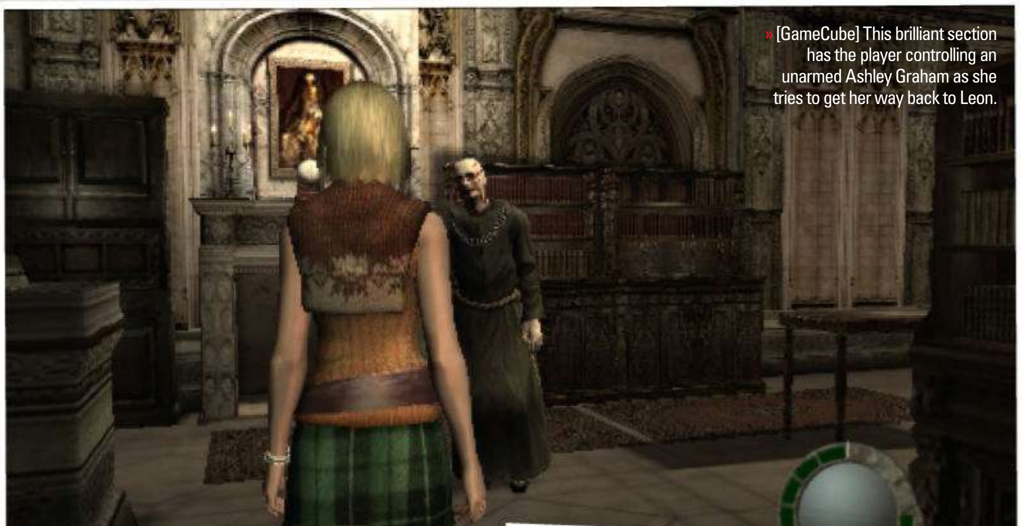
■ A new decade brought another version of *Resident Evil 4*, this time remastered into HD for the PC and seventh generation of consoles. While the move into high definition successfully smooths out *Resident Evil 4*'s visuals, there's nothing new beyond the extras from the Nintendo Wii version and a cursory 12 achievements for gamers to collect.

XBOX ONE/PLAYSTATION 4

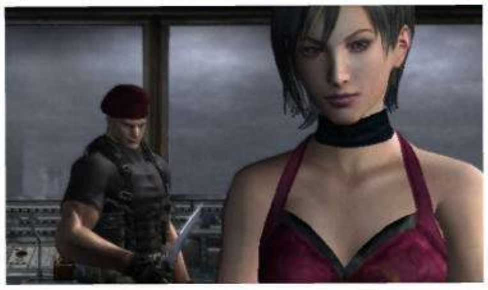
■ The insatiable appetite for *Resident Evil* continued onto the Xbox One and PS4, stoked by anticipation for the incoming seventh instalment. Exhibiting all of the brilliant gameplay that has made the game so loved, this is, in truth, an underwhelming release in terms of actual improvement in-game, albeit in a swift 60fps and 1080p resolution.

NINTENDO SWITCH

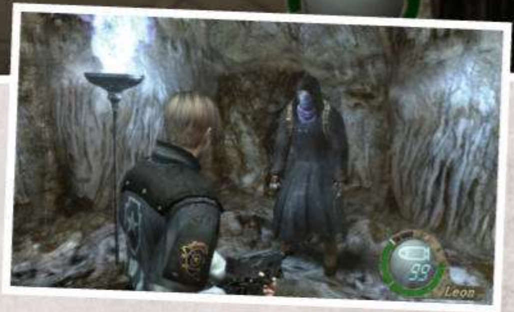
■ The motion controls of the earlier Wii game are absent for this Switch version, and once more, this updated *Resident Evil 4* feels like a bit of a missed opportunity. However, the ability to use a classic GameCube controller is rather apt, and it's great that you can play it on the move. Like its peers it's another solid port but it could have been so much better.



» [GameCube] This brilliant section has the player controlling an unarmed Ashley Graham as she tries to get her way back to Leon.



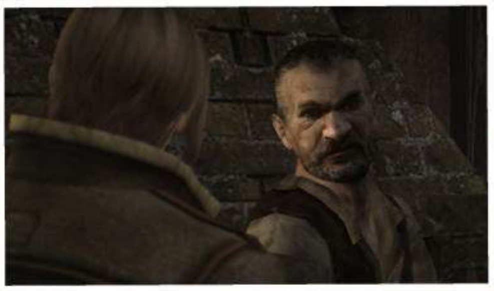
» [GameCube] The mysterious Ada Wong shoots the breeze with uber-mercenary Jack Krauser.



» [GameCube] The Merchant is a new character Leon meets in *Resi 4*. He's found in unusual places and always has the best gear to buy.

date are hunting down Leon: rustic villagers armed with pitchforks, sickles and knives, and given a voice, a guttural Spanish brogue laced with hostile intonation. Of equal shock was Capcom's announcement early in November 2004. "It looks like the folks at Capcom Entertainment were only kidding," chimed IGN, "when they sternly insisted over and over again that the GameCube action thriller *Resident Evil 4* would forever remain exclusive to Nintendo's console." Excitement and pressure from fans and (apparently) shareholders had taken its toll: *Resident Evil 4* would be coming to the Sony PlayStation 2, albeit some months after its GameCube release. Even though the game became a massive hit on the Nintendo console, selling over 1.5 million units, the Sony PlayStation 2 version enabled a whole new legion of fans to enjoy the game, starting with that famous village location.

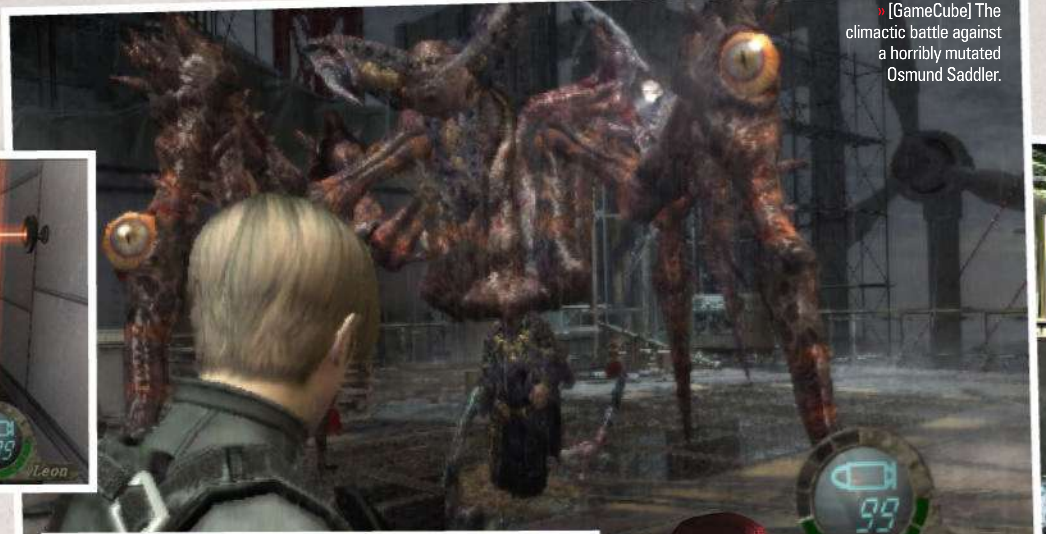
The village forms the rapidly beating heart of *Resident Evil 4*'s opening. Sent to a remote Spanish region to locate Ashley Graham, Leon soon finds himself surrounded by its citizens, acolytes of Los Illuminados, the mysterious cult led by Osmund Saddler that has captured the president's daughter. The villagers are infected with Las Plagas ('the pests'), and after a token effort by Leon to question one of them, they turn on the agent in a momentous early scene led by the chainsaw-wielding Dr Salvador. Chuck Beaver was co-designer for the 2008 sci-fi horror *Dead Space*, and he cites the opening village encounter as his favourite scene in the game. "That was great design – in fact, I think that whole opening town zombie rush is pretty epic – talk about feeling in the moment." The village serves as the perfect primer to the horrors ahead of the player and the new gameplay style in *Resident Evil 4*, a claustrophobic nightmare as the Ganado ('cattle') relentlessly pursue Leon, led by the near-invulnerable Dr Salvador. With ammunition scarce at this early stage, the player must frantically explore the buildings in search of weapons, ammunition and health items, clambering over roofs, crashing through windows and kicking down ladders to avoid the pursuing mob. "I remember being wowed by the intensity of that scene and the enemies coming from all directions," recalls Alex Aniel. "With *Resident Evil* games being fixed-camera affairs up until that point, the level of immersion was a new experience." The fast-paced, action-movie ambiance of this early scene continues throughout *Resident Evil 4* as enemies hurl themselves in their droves at Leon, the brief moments of respite precisely positioned to give the player some much-needed breathing space. "My first experience [playing] *Resident Evil 4* was the demo disc included in a one-off special of *Famitsu* [magazine]," continues Alex. "That sold me on the new formula – it was unlike anything I had ever tried up until that point, and easily the most visually beautiful 3D game I had laid eyes on. I knew then that Capcom had a hit on its hands."



» [GameCube] Leon makes a nonchalant attempt to see if this gentleman knows of Ashley's whereabouts. Unfortunately, he doesn't look interested.

"THE EXPLODING HEAD WITH A WHIPPING PARASITE WAS DEFINITELY AN INSPIRATION FOR SOME OF OUR EARLY NECROMORPH CONCEPTS"
CHUCK BEAVER

Having shaken off the shackles of its antiquated gameplay, *Resident Evil* began gathering new fans, intrigued by the mix of horror and action. The centrepiece of this fresh approach, at least initially, is the novel viewpoint, the game's camera constantly sitting behind and to the protagonist's right, shifting to a sharper, more- focussed view when Leon aims his weapon. "I was aware of that type of camera angle – but not to the extent that *Resident Evil 4* took it," says Alex Moore. "It felt very new, fresh and much more cinematic." The constant flow of action setpieces means that, even during the many cutscenes, there's no rest for the player as the Ganado push boulders at Leon or a QuickTime Event boss battle unexpectedly crops up. The persistence with tank controls (rather than, for example, the ultra-fluid movement of *Devil May Cry*'s Dante) also works in the game's favour, helping to make each encounter a frantic battle against the onrushing Ganado. "It was very engaging to swing through the core loops of combat and then out to cutscenes," recalls Chuck Beaver. "And then back into those foreboding settings, exploring with those tank controls!" The early *Dead Space* prototypes had lovingly recreated *Resident Evil 4*'s control method – but this was one influence that didn't last. "Back in those days, when the [EA Redwood Shores] team was tiny, I was in charge of focus testing," says Chuck. "*Gears Of War* and *Halo* had become cultural touchstones by then – all the focus ▶



» [GameCube] The climactic battle against a horribly mutated Osmund Saddler.

» [GameCube] It wouldn't be *Resident Evil* without deadly lasers to contend with.

tests clearly voted down the now-outdated controls as too sluggish, despite being horror genre standard." Nevertheless, *Resident Evil*'s continued use of the rotational control method perfectly suits its gameplay, although it will be interesting to see how the remake adapts this for a contemporary audience.

Despite the move away from tank controls, *Dead Space* continued to be highly influenced by the Capcom game, often called '*Resident Evil 4* in space' during early development. As a *Resident Evil* virgin, the new camera angle did not faze Chuck Beaver. "I was genuinely surprised at how engrossing and fun it was, and didn't realise how well they had perfected the atmosphere and vibe. At the time, each wave of new game releases seemed to bring a huge leap in resolution, and it was fun to enjoy that wave." Released in widescreen format – back when it was not common – a colossal number of *Resident Evil 4*'s elements made it into *Dead Space*, not least its seemingly invincible monsters, the Regenerators. "Ha, yes, those for sure," laughs Chuck when we ask him about *Resident Evil 4*'s effect on *Dead Space*. "And the little red dot as the targeting reticule, holding a button to aim, the abandoned tank controls and over-the-shoulder third-person orientation. So many of the basics of combat, control and, of course, the enemies. The exploding head with a whipping parasite was definitely an inspiration for some of our early Necromorph concepts – especially those with a body-horror angle."

For gamers brought up on *Resident Evil* and its frustratingly imprecise aiming, that red line and dot (which increased in size when an enemy was in Leon's sights) was a blessing, helping Leon target vulnerable locations – in other words, the head – and with this came *Resident Evil 4*'s glorious wound animations. While Rare's *GoldenEye* and the PC game *Soldier Of Fortune* had already notably done body-part-specific damage and the subsequent AI reaction, it was *Resident Evil 4* that truly popularised the process. Shoot a Ganado in their leg and they clutch the limb in agony before Las Plagas overpowers the pain and the villager continues their attack. And, naturally, headshots come to the fore, enemy bonces exploding in a mass of gore, sometimes a bladed Las Plagas sprouting from their open necks and resuming the assault on Leon. The agent's inability to move and shoot at the same time also increases the game's tension. "My first reaction to *Resident Evil 4* was, 'How do I shoot?' followed by, 'Why can't I move and shoot?' followed by, 'Oooooh!'" recalls Alex Moore. "I instantly clicked with the game far more than I'd ever done with earlier entries." *Resident Evil 4*'s shooting, naturally a significant part of the game, had been perfected, accentuating its move to a more action-based

> "IT WAS VERY BRAVE TO MAKE THE SHOOTING STATIC"
> **ALEX MOORE**

RE4 TIMELINE

SUMMER 1998

Following the success of *Resident Evil 2*, Capcom's Shinji Mikami concludes that the series needs a new direction.

WINTER 1998

A few months later, development begins on *Resident Evil 3* for Sony's incoming PlayStation 2 console.

JANUARY 1999

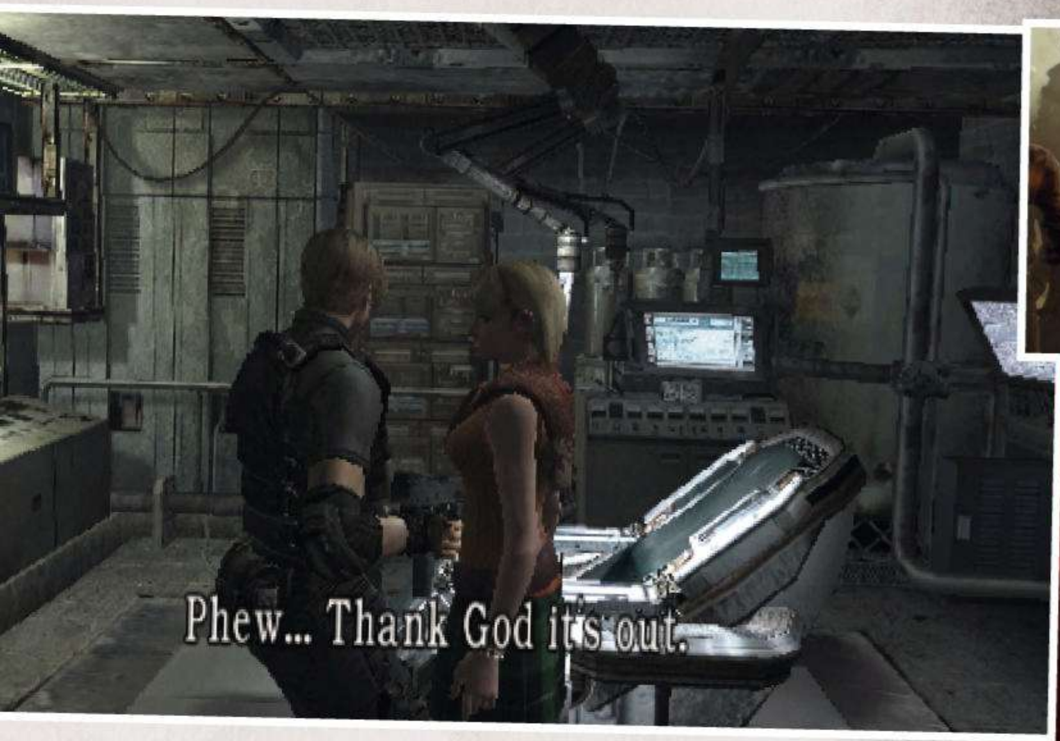
Capcom repurposes off-shoot *Resident Evil 1.9* into *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis*. *Resident Evil 3* becomes *Resident Evil 4*.

DECEMBER 1999

Capcom officially confirms *Resident Evil 4* will be released on the PlayStation 2 at some point in the future.

SUMMER 2000

With its gameplay veering away from Resi, Capcom shifts the development of *Resi 4* to a new IP, *Devil May Cry*.



» [GameCube] Leon and Ashley can remove Las Plagas from their bodies late in the game.

template. "It was very brave to make the shooting static," continues Alex. "But it just fits perfectly with the game and adds a depth to the gameplay that, until that point, shooters hadn't really had." Even better, shooting an enemy can stagger them. Leon can take advantage of this if he is close enough, delivering a swift and powerful kick to his opponent's head via another cinematic tangent. These little asides and filmic interludes pepper *Resident Evil 4*: villagers push a giant boulder after Leon; ancient suits of armour crash towards Ashley; a mysterious alien-like creature stabs at Leon with its tail; and then there are the bosses.

From bizarre bosses such as *Resident Evil*'s Plant 42 to the unstoppable (well, almost) hulking Tyrant Nemesis in *Resident Evil 3*, this is a series that has always revelled in its fights against rampaging, mutated super enemies. The variety of these disgusting and horrible creatures has motivated a whole generation of horror game designers, and not just those behind *Dead Space*'s regenerating Necromorph. Says *The Persistence*'s Alex Moore, "We were set on having different-sized enemies from the start, and a lot of that

REMAKING RESI 4

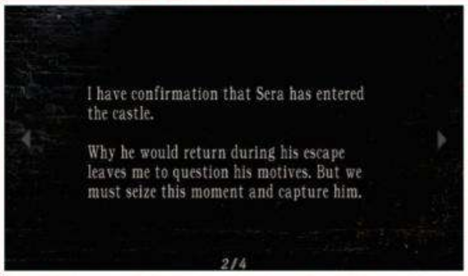
THAT TRICKY FOURTH REMAKE

Released as this issue goes to press, Capcom's latest remake, following on from the hugely popular *Resident Evil 2* (2019) and *Resident Evil 3* (2020), looks set to remind fans of *Resident Evil 4*'s great level design and gameplay while bringing a new fancy sheen to its visuals. Announced in June of last year at Sony's State Of Play exhibition, *Resident Evil 4* is promising to update the game to the modern day while retaining the core principles that made the original such a hit back in 2005. The fourth game in the series perhaps represents the greatest challenge to the Capcom team – the original game has considerably more in common with gaming today and is viewed as perfect in the eyes of many fans, most of us at **Retro Gamer** included. Nevertheless, *Resident Evil 4* 2023 appears to eliminate some of the issues that divided gamers 18 years ago. QuickTime Events (QTEs) will be massively scaled back, if not totally absent, and the escort sections involving the president's daughter, Ashley Graham, will be smoothed out, ensuring they are less troublesome to players. Another sticking point to many is Leon's lack of movement, and while this is a crucial factor in ramping up the game's tension, the remake will add a parry mechanic for when the situation gets a little too close for comfort. With the promise of a deeper plot and characterisation, sidequests and the option to tackle some areas using stealth, *Resident Evil 4*'s remake looks set to reinvigorate the survival horror hit that changed gaming forever.

AUGUST 2001	The PlayStation 2 game that was supposed to be *Resident Evil 4*, *Devil May Cry*, is released to universal praise.
MARCH 2002	Capcom's Production Studio 4 releases the astonishingly good remake of *Resident Evil* for the GameCube.
NOVEMBER 2002	*Resident Evil Zero*, is released to a generally positive reception. Sales are solid but below Capcom's expectations.
NOVEMBER 2002	Capcom officially reveals *Resident Evil 4* for the first time, now as one of five proposed GameCube exclusives.
MAY 2003	Capcom officially reveals its 'Hook Man' or 'Hallucination' build of *Resident Evil 4* at this year's E3.
SUMMER 2003	Dissatisfied with its direction, Shinji Mikami takes over directorial duties. A new build of *Resident Evil 4* begins.

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

DESPITE THE NEW DIRECTION FOR RESIDENT EVIL DURING ITS FOURTH MAIN INSTALMENT, SOME THINGS REMAIN REASSURINGLY FAMILIAR



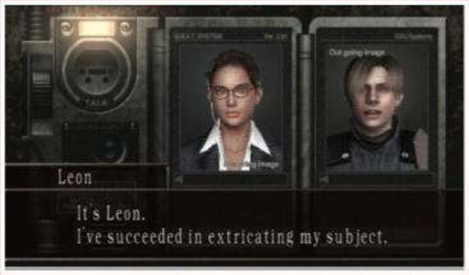
I have confirmation that Sera has entered the castle.

Why he would return during his escape leaves me to question his motives. But we must seize this moment and capture him.

2/4

PLENTY TO READ

■ Throughout *Resi 4*, Leon discovers documents and memos left lying around by Saddler and his cohorts. Eventually, these reveal the hideous plans that the Los Illuminados have for the world.

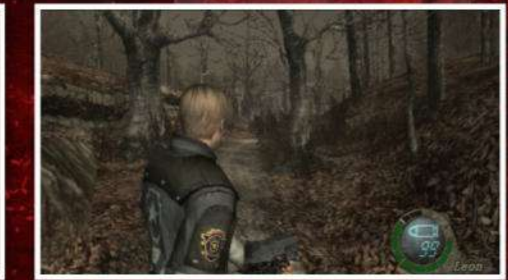


Leon

It's Leon.
I've succeeded in extricating my subject.

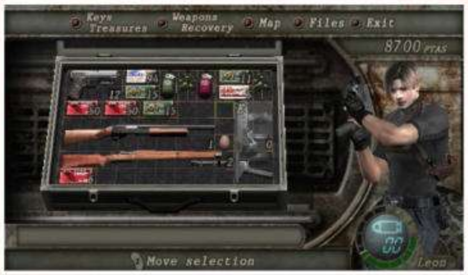
YOU WHAT?

■ The original games were (in)famous for their stilted and misplaced dialogue, and while the fourth game considerably improves this, the odd clanger still shines through. Even cool dude Leon is not immune.



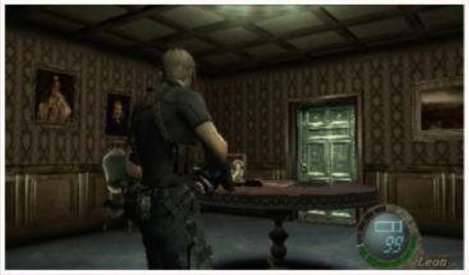
GOTTA ROTATE

■ *Resident Evil 4* may have radically altered the series' camera angle and viewpoint, but it didn't entirely throw the baby out with the bath water – Leon still rotates rather than directly moves.



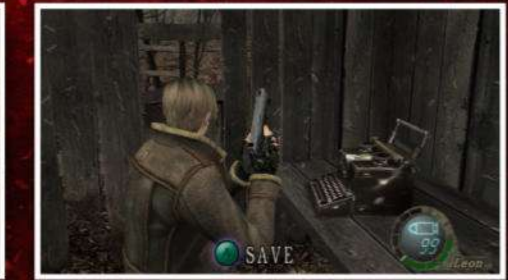
MAKE ROOM, MAKE ROOM!

■ While *Resident Evil 4* dispenses away with the storage boxes, keeping track of your inventory and jigging things around is once again a vital facet of the game. And, crucially, it's fun too.



LOVE WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH THE PLACE

■ The *Resident Evil 4* designers just couldn't resist. Hidden deep within the castle are several plush residential areas, hugely evocative of the Spencer Mansion from the original game.



WHERE'S A TYPEWRITER WHEN YOU NEED ONE?

■ Answer: everywhere! Fortunately, these rural villagers and their demonic overseers love to write, so there's always a typewriter waiting for Leon to save his progress. No need for those pesky ribbons!

JANUARY 2004

■ Gamers get a good look at the latest version, with much of the initial village section forming a playable demo.

NOVEMBER 2004

■ Capcom publishes a stunning announcement on its official website: *Resident Evil 4* will also appear on Sony's PlayStation 2 console.

JANUARY 2005

■ Capcom releases *Resident Evil 4* on the Nintendo GameCube. It's not only a huge critical success but also a commercial one.

OCTOBER 2005

■ Capcom's horror sequel finally makes it to the PlayStation 2, despite its earlier promise of exclusivity for GameCube owners.

APRIL 2007

■ Shinji Mikami apologises to GameCube owners who bought the console on the promise of *Resident Evil 4*'s exclusivity.

MAY 2007

■ The Wii port of *Resident Evil 4* utilises the console's controllers and becomes another best-seller. It is one of our favourite versions.

came from the contrast that the *Resident Evil 4* bosses bring to the game – for example, we wanted the Berserker to have the same, 'Oh shit!' feel as an El Gigante encounter." Additionally, *Resident Evil 4* brings regular enemies to life, the slow mindless zombies of the previous games a far cry from the villagers and soldiers Leon encounters. "I remember most of the Ganado behaviour of rapidly closing – that was always freaky," remembers Chuck. "And there was always some icky person right in your face about to brain you with an axe!" Throughout *Resident Evil 4*, enemies sway from side to side to dodge Leon's shots, hold their hands up to protect their heads and wield dangerous implements, often throwing them at the agent.

> "EVERY LITTLE ELEMENT TO THE GAME'S DESIGN LEAVES AN IMPRESSION"
> **ALEX ANIEL**

So you get it. *Resident Evil 4* is good. Great, even. But the impact – the impression on gamers, super fans such as Alex Aniel and developers – has rarely, if ever, been matched in videogame history, reaching out to many of the most successful videogame franchises of all time. "When *Resident Evil 4* – the inspiration for our close-up third-person perspective – finally came out in January 2005, it reminded us that *Gears* was about one thing – combat," says *Gears Of Wars* designer Cliff Bleszinski in his book *Control Freak*. "And combat was fought close-up, and it was physical, strategic, scary and subject to a rhythm that was all its own." Even *Resident Evil 4*'s inventory management, smoothed out from the tight and laborious process of the earlier entries, has inspired its own game, Fractal Projects' *Save Room*. "We looked at *Resident Evil 4*'s inventory system when we were making *Rogue Trooper*," says Alex Moore, "especially how the herbs and other items combined. While [*Resident Evil 4*] is a very different game to *Rogue Trooper*, there's always something to learn from the best games out there."

All the inspiration derived from *Resident Evil 4* springs from admiration of its aesthetic, groundbreaking technical details and gameplay. As the game enjoys its latest iteration, a ground-up remake following countless HD ports and conversions, it's clear that this goes beyond mere nostalgia. "I can't think of another game that's quite like *Resident Evil 4* in terms of the complete package," notes Alex Aniel. "And while many games have adopted its gameplay, you won't find someone like Leon or Salazar in a game like *Dead Space* or *The Last Of Us*." Most strikingly, for a game that's over 18 years old, is how ahead of its time *Resident Evil 4* was. Continues Alex, "Every little element to the game's design leaves an impression, and the quality of the visuals, music and gameplay was far beyond the competition in 2005. Why is it still popular today? Because it's always been entertaining and provocative to play." For Alex, the *Resident Evil* franchise fostered a deeper interest in Japanese culture, culminating in a move to Japan shortly after the release of the fourth game. Fluent in the language, he connected to many of the people behind *Resident Evil* throughout the years for his book, *Itchy, Tasty*. "Without *Resident Evil*, I would be a very different person."

» [GameCube] They don't look very friendly…

It feels like **Retro Gamer** could dedicate a whole issue to *Resident Evil 4*. Over the last few pages, we haven't even discussed its beloved unlockable, the adrenalin-fuelled Mercenaries, or the most quotable of all of its characters, the ubiquitous Merchant ("What're you buyin'?"). "Why is that so iconic?" laughs Chuck Beaver. "No one knows. But it is." Like so many of *Resident Evil 4*'s parts, the Merchant just fits, and fits perfectly. "Someone who may not have yet played *Resident Evil 4* may be tempted to skip it in favour of the remake," says Alex Aniel. "While I have little doubt that it will be an excellent game in its own right, the 2005 original is something special and not to be missed regardless." *

Our thanks to Chuck Beaver, Alex Moore and Alex Aniel. To learn more about *Resident Evil 4* and its predecessors, we heartily recommend Alex's book, *Itchy, Tasty: An Unofficial History Of Resident Evil*, available at Amazon and all good bookshops.

» [GameCube] Leon encounters these inhuman regenerating creatures on the Island section.

JULY 2007

■ *Resident Evil 4* comes second in *Edge Presents The 100 Best Videogames*. It was later awarded an amended 10 in 2013's issue 258.

SEPTEMBER 2011

■ Capcom releases an HD remaster for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. It's fairly basic but still proves to be popular with fans.

AUGUST 2016

■ Capcom brings *Resident Evil 4* up to date in a 60fps 1080p remaster of the HD release, on Xbox One and PlayStation 4.

MAY 2019

■ *Resident Evil 4* debuts on the Nintendo Switch. Available digitally in Europe it's available elsewhere in physical form with *Resi 5* and *6*.

JUNE 2022

■ Capcom announces *Resident Evil 4 Remake* at Sony's State Of Play show. The news goes down extremely well with fans of the series.

OCTOBER 2056

■ *Resident Evil 4* receives a brand-new makeover for Sony's PlayStation 8 console. Everyone decides to buy it *once again*.

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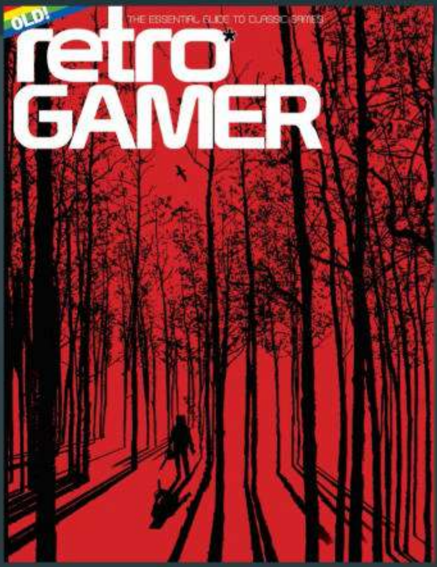

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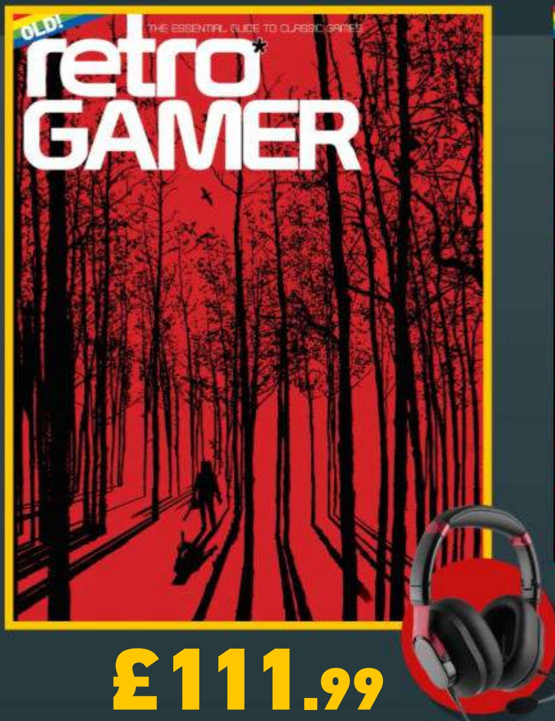

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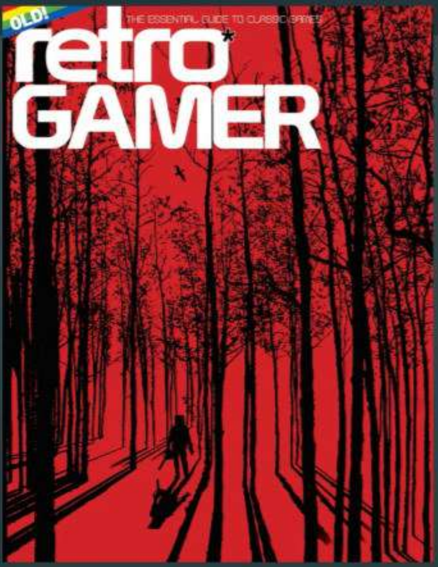

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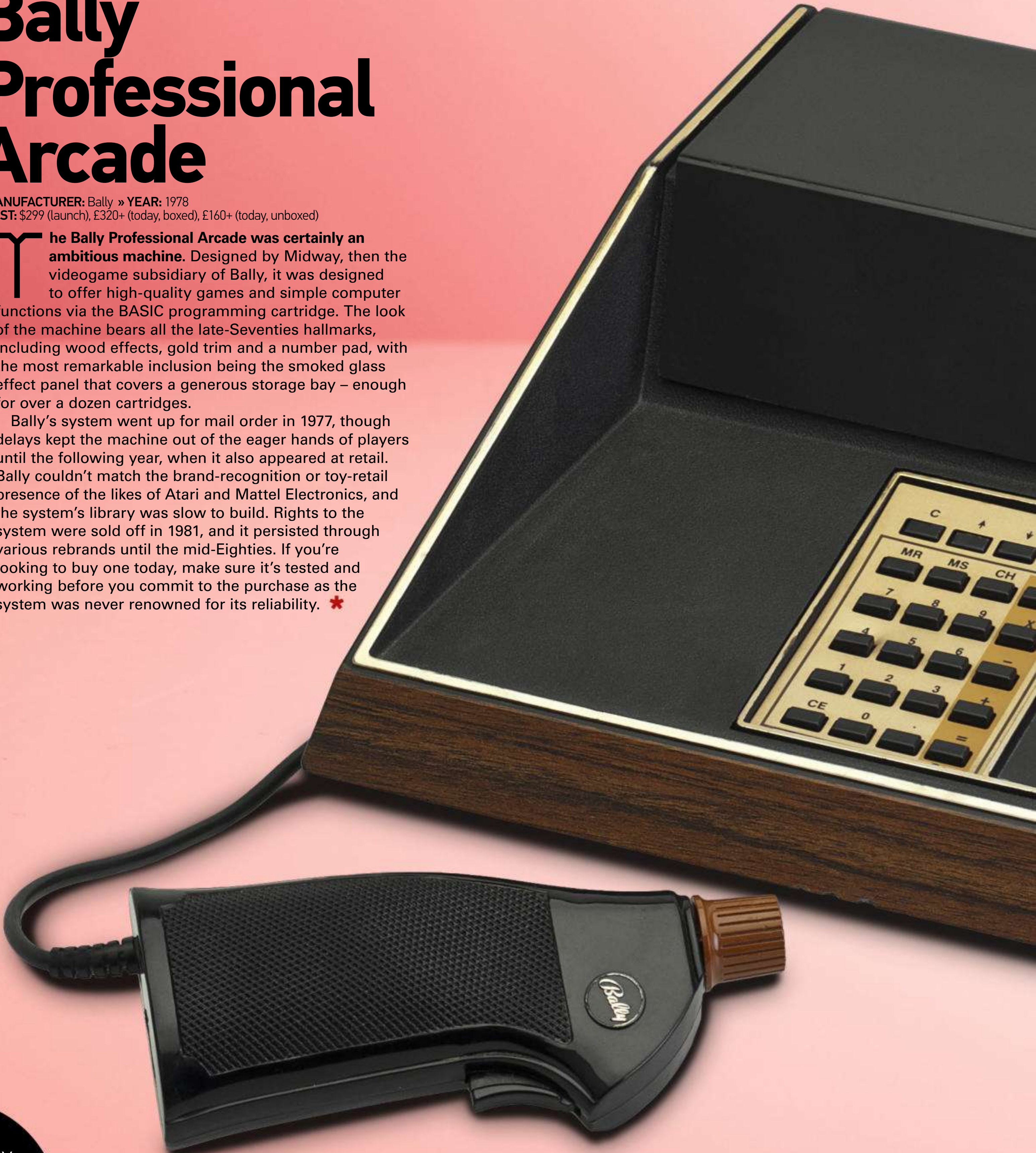
Bally Professional Arcade

» MANUFACTURER: Bally **» YEAR:** 1978
» COST: $299 (launch), £320+ (today, boxed), £160+ (today, unboxed)

The Bally Professional Arcade was certainly an ambitious machine. Designed by Midway, then the videogame subsidiary of Bally, it was designed to offer high-quality games and simple computer functions via the BASIC programming cartridge. The look of the machine bears all the late-Seventies hallmarks, including wood effects, gold trim and a number pad, with the most remarkable inclusion being the smoked glass effect panel that covers a generous storage bay – enough for over a dozen cartridges.

Bally's system went up for mail order in 1977, though delays kept the machine out of the eager hands of players until the following year, when it also appeared at retail. Bally couldn't match the brand-recognition or toy-retail presence of the likes of Atari and Mattel Electronics, and the system's library was slow to build. Rights to the system were sold off in 1981, and it persisted through various rebrands until the mid-Eighties. If you're looking to buy one today, make sure it's tested and working before you commit to the purchase as the system was never renowned for its reliability. *



SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

Bally Professional Arcade

■ This system was variously known as the Bally Home Library Computer prior to launch, the Bally Professional Arcade at launch, the Bally Computer System in 1981 and the Bally Astrocade in 1982.

PROCESSORS: ZILOG Z80 8-BIT CPU (1.789 MHZ)

RAM: 4KB MAIN MEMORY (EXPANDABLE)

GRAPHICS: 160X102 DISPLAY (160X88 IN BASIC), UP TO TWO SETS OF FOUR COLOURS FROM A PALETTE OF 256

AUDIO: THREE SQUARE WAVE CHANNELS, ONE NOISE GENERATOR

MEDIA: 8KB ROM CARTRIDGE

Bally
PROFESSIONAL
ARCADE ™
INSERT
CASSETTE
RESET
EJECT
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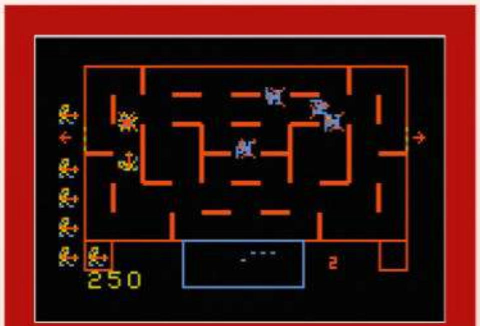
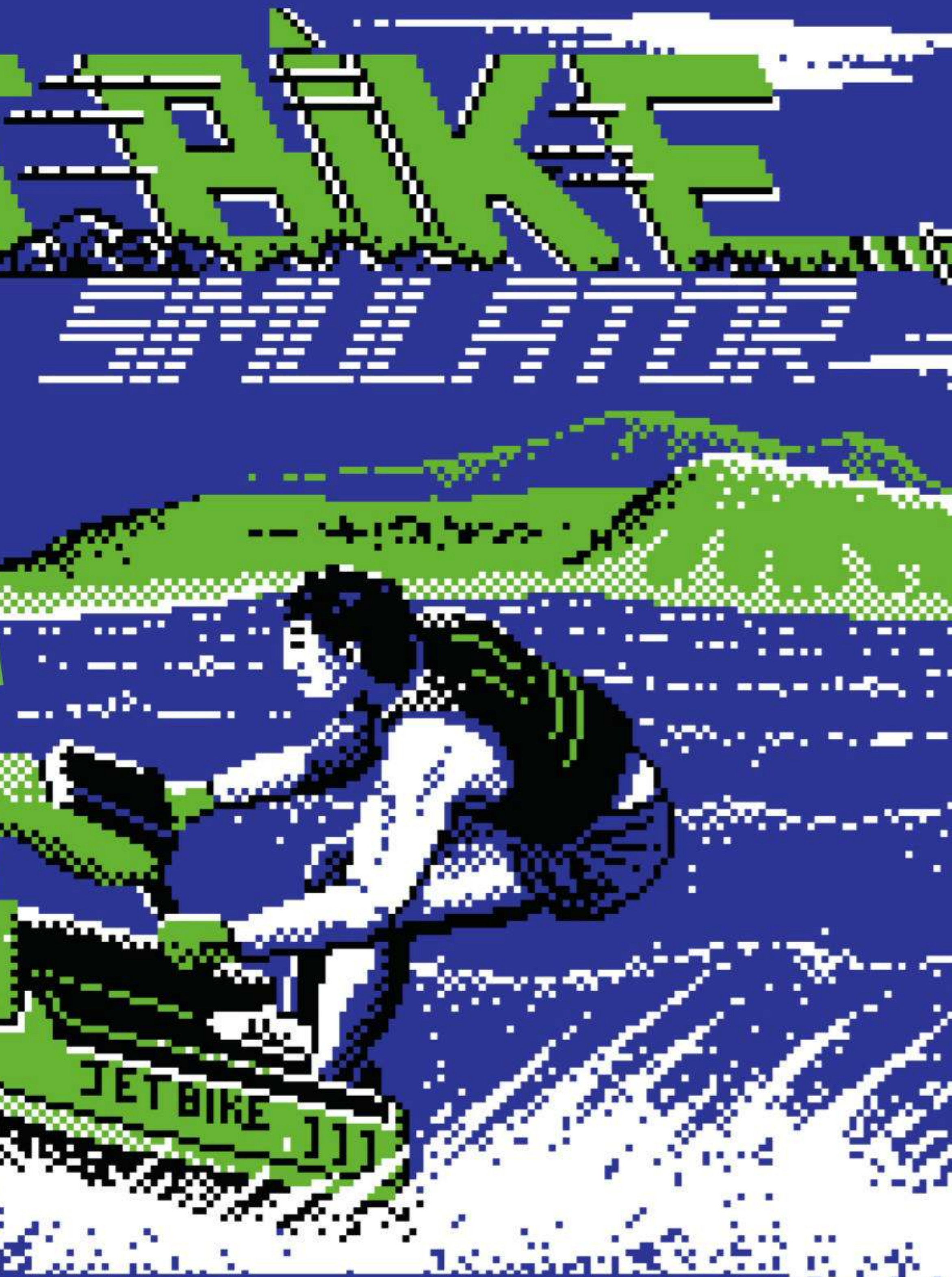


ESSENTIAL GAME

The Incredible Wizard

Wizard Of Wor has always been great value as a frantic maze-based shoot-'em-up, and *The Incredible Wizard* is that game in all but name. It's an excellent version too, with fast and responsive gameplay. There's not a hint of flicker or slowdown, even when the maze is teeming with baddies for you to blast, and the audio offers plenty of weird and wonderful spot effects. The only thing that's missing is the sampled speech of the arcade game, but that omission is easy to forgive on a machine of this vintage.

THE MAKING OF

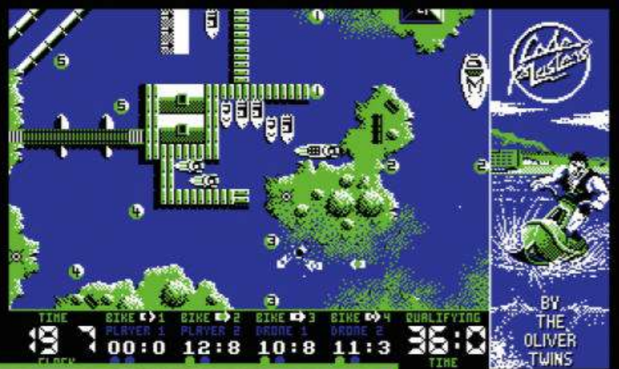


» Philip and Andrew Oliver made numerous hit games for Codemasters.

PHILIP AND ANDREW OLIVER HAD ALREADY ENJOYED DIZZYING SUCCESS BY THE TIME THEY MADE JET BIKE SIMULATOR. BUT WOULD GAMERS RACE TO PLAY THEIR LATEST CREATION OR WOULD A GAMBLE WITH A NEW PRICING STRUCTURE CAUSE IT TO SINK?

WORDS BY DAVID CROOKES

» [Amstrad CPC] Gamers encountered the lakes levels first. After a race, you could hit replay and see where you went wrong.



JET BIKE SIMULATOR

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** CODEMASTERS
- » **DEVELOPER:** THE OLIVER TWINS
- » **RELEASED:** 1988
- » **PLATFORM:** AMSTRAD CPC, ZX SPECTRUM, COMMODORE 64
- » **GENRE:** SPORT

» Philip Oliver takes to the water on his jet bike back in the late-Eighties.

SIDE 1 JET SKI SPEECH MELODY
PREMIUM GRADE FERRIC COMPUTER TAPE C15

» Philip Oliver provided the in-game digitised speech for *Jet Bike Simulator* but Melody White provided a female voice for *Championship Jet Ski Simulator.*

The cover of *Jet Bike Simulator* made something of a splash – internally at Codemasters at least. In a list of features promoting the virtues of this top-down racer (among them a free colour poster and an official Codemasters sticker, no less), were the words "by the famous Oliver twins". Five words which, as it turned out, made Philip and Andrew Oliver cringe ever so slightly.

When the game was released in 1988, the brothers had indeed made something of a name for themselves. They'd achieved success on the Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64 with *Robin Hood*, *Ghost Hunters*, *Grand Prix Simulator*, *Professional Ski Simulator*, *3D Starfighter* and *Dizzy* so it made sense to promote their undoubted prowess.

But whether or not they were actually famous was another matter. "[It] was Bruce Everiss [Codemasters' marketing manager] doing it as a joke," Andrew Oliver told Amstrad Action in September 1988. "Now all the mail we get at Codemasters is addressed to 'The Famous Oliver Twins!'"

Japes aside, Codemasters certainly had lots of faith in the Olivers. When they were given the go-ahead to develop *Jet Bike Simulator*, the publisher earmarked it for a Codemasters Plus release, reckoning the Olivers had more than enough clout and talent to pull off a game that would retail for £4.99 – half way between budget and full price. "It was one of the launch Codemasters Plus titles," Philip tells us. "Codemasters was selling all of its games for £1.99 to £2.99 at the time and it wanted to increase the price without going full price which it felt wouldn't be well-received by consumers."

The idea for *Jet Bike Simulator* had emerged in the summer of 1987. "We were spending Sunday afternoons riding on jet bikes in the Cotswold Water Park with the Codemasters' founders Richard and David Darling and this inspired us," Philip says. "We were riding high from the success of *Grand Prix Simulator* and *Pro Ski Simulator* and we wanted to follow them up with another aspirational sport."

> **"WE TOOK A LOT OF CODE ACROSS FROM GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR"**
> **PHILIP OLIVER**

While enjoying the pursuit, the Olivers believed the adrenaline rush they felt on the water could be replicated on-screen. "When you can finally get going, jet biking is exhilarating but, like riding a bike, it isn't easy at first," Philips explains. "When we first tried, we turned up, got kitted up in wetsuits and had a briefing about safety and how the acceleration and cut-off switch worked. It basically cut the engine in the event you fell off and that initially happened most times you tried standing up!"

In some ways, this background to the game's development explains what emerged: an often-difficult, frustrating game that, nevertheless, had you on the edge of your seat, flying by the seat of your pants. Still, it was at least going to be less dangerous than the real thing. "We had a few scrapes from falling off in shallow water," Philip recalls of his real-life jet bike encounters. "But the worst incident was when one of our uni friends brought his girlfriend along. She managed to hit another jet bike side-on and sink it!"

Development on the game began in October 1987. The Olivers were 19 years old and the summer fun had come to an abrupt end. "The autumn months saw our university friends return to their respective universities and the sunny days had turned to overcast rainy days so we returned to working crazy hours in my bedroom-cum-office making this game," Philip says.

From the start, the pair knew the direction they wanted the game to go. "We knew jet bikes were very aspirational as they had appeared in TV shows and films and looked really cool, but we assumed most people hadn't been lucky enough to try the real thing," Philip says. "Our aim was to make a fun game where people felt as if they were racing jet bikes."

Even so, the pair knew that they couldn't ever hope to replicate the feeling of riding one in full. "With the limitations of 8-bit computers, the word 'simulator' was a bit of a stretch," Philip admits. Instead they concentrated mainly on what would make racing the bikes fun and, to make life easier, the brothers drew direct inspiration from a previous game: *Grand Prix Simulator*. "We'd written *Grand Prix Simulator* a year earlier and it served as a good starting point," Philip explains. "We were able to take the theme of jet bikes and make a top-down racing game that was very similar to *GPS*."

***Grand Prix Simulator* ensured the twins could speed up the development time of *Jet Bike Simulator* by allowing them to recycle much of what they'd already written.** "We took a lot of code across from *Grand Prix Simulator* but we'd learned better techniques in that time so a lot was recoded to be cleaner, faster and more efficient," Philip explains. "We made adjustments to the acceleration, deceleration and inertia to simulate jet biking and this made it enjoyable to play on-screen."

The idea of the game was to race against three other jet bikes, completing a set number of laps against a strict time limit in order to qualify for the next course. The Olivers decided to determine the path of ▶

CONVERSION CAPERS

WHICH VERSION OF JET BIKE SIMULATOR MADE THE BIGGER SPLASH?

AMSTRAD CPC

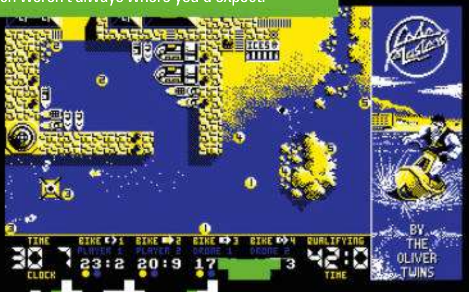
The Olivers created *Jet Bike Simulator* on an Amstrad CPC, working together with graphics artist James Wilson who not only made fine use of the machine's four-colour palette but designed a fabulous set of circuits too. Although collision detection was poor and John Paul Eldridge's frenetic music proved ear-splitting, the game moved along at a great pace. Even so, trying to beat that timer to qualify could prove quite frustrating.

ZX SPECTRUM

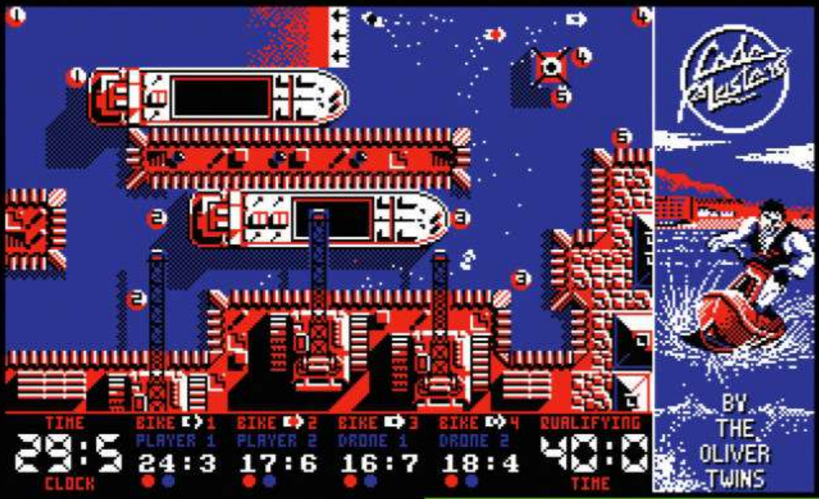
David Whittaker's tune couldn't fail to get you in the mood for what proved to be an otherwise faithful conversion from the CPC – collision detection issues and all. Good use of colour made it easier to follow the water through the various gates but it could be difficult at times to work out which jet bike you were controlling although this was an issue in general.

C64

Mark Clements, who went on to produce games for Thalamus, was handed the reigns for a conversion which seemed to be retailing for £8.99 – more than the price of the game on the Spectrum and Amstrad! It's hard to see why because this iteration is pretty much the same as the other versions, albeit with David Dunn now providing the sound (and a very cool tune).



» [Amstrad CPC] One of the first tasks when playing a new course was to figure the order of the gates which weren't always where you'd expect.



» [Amstrad CPC] For this docks level, you needed to go up and around in the top-right corner before heading left. The circuits were making the most of the single screens.

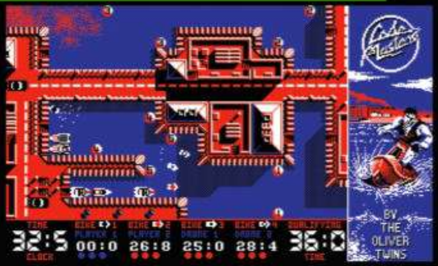
▶ each circuit by having numbered gates, forcing players to go through each one in turn – failure to do so led to disqualification.

To make the game trickier, there would also be obstacles to avoid (easier said than done) as well as some nice touches such as jumps to leap over and bridges to go under. From the start, the Olivers wanted the game to be enjoyed against the computer or also with a friend. Races, after all, are usually better with a human opponent.

In order to justify selling the game at a higher price than the Codemasters' budget releases, however, the Olivers were asked to pack in more. Since the game was going to be released on two cassettes, the brothers decided that they would use the extra capacity to create a game with two difficulty levels: Standard and Expert.

They worked out that they should create a game with 24 circuits and theme them to add variety. There would be six standard courses based around a lakes theme with a set of more challenging courses on the B-side of the first tape. The second tape would include six courses themed around docks and another six themed around the coast. For the Standard levels, it would be a race against a clock as well as other players. In Expert mode, gamers would progress by avoiding coming last.

It meant there were a lot of courses to design and these had to take a few things into account. "With 8-bit computers, game designs were very constrained by the technical limitations," Philip explains.



» [Amstrad CPC] A lot of effort had undoubtedly gone into the look of the game but the timer could be unforgiving.

"We were unable to scroll the screen, due to processing speed limitations, which necessitated a fixed-screen game, which in turn dictated the size and view of the jet bikes."

This meant the courses had to be confined to a single screen and they couldn't become too cluttered. But they still needed to be varied and Philip says this was achieved by the different environment styles. "They provided course variety in both layout and look," he explains. "The lakes had shallows that caused drag if you went into those areas while the docks had many straight walls."

It didn't take long to create the courses. Indeed, the game's entire development only took six weeks. "We created an editor that allowed us to design the courses within the game and then play test immediately, so we had a fast turn around to tweak and test course designs," Philip says. The courses were mainly designed by James Wilson who would create the circuits and post them to the Olivers to import into the game. Gates and starting positions could then be added.

James also created most of the graphics. The small team made the Amstrad CPC the lead platform and they used the computer's Mode 1 graphics, giving a resolution of

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR
SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, VARIOUS
YEAR: 1987

PRO BMX SIMULATOR
SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, VARIOUS
YEAR: 1988

FANTASY WORLD DIZZY (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, VARIOUS
YEAR: 1989

RECREATING A CLASSIC

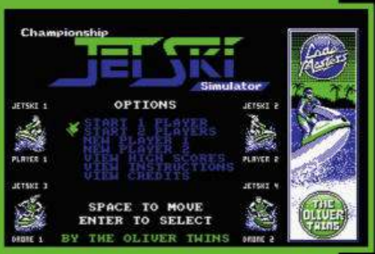
WHEN SALES OF JET BIKE SIMULATOR DIDN'T MEET EXPECTATIONS THE TWINS GOT REMASTERING

■ *Jet Bike Simulator* did not sell well, primarily because it was put out on the Codemasters Plus label. As Philip explains, shops placed the game in the same section as full-price releases. "Budget games were always in standard, single-cassette boxes so the Codemasters Plus titles didn't fit," Philip laments.

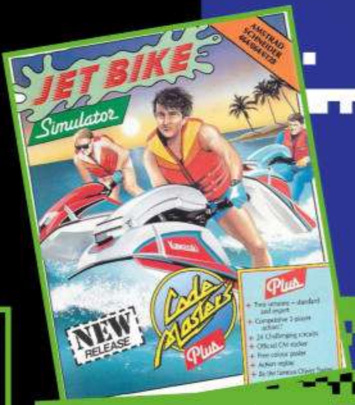
In response, Codemasters reissued the game as a budget title, changing its name to *Championship Jet Ski Simulator*. "It was decided to re-release all the Codemasters Plus games at £2.99 on a single cassette," says Philip. "Some work was required to remaster *Jet Bike Simulator*."

The Olivers chose the best eight lake courses, ensured they were relatively easy to play and placed them on one side of the tape. They then placed eight docks courses on the other side as the Expert-level circuits. It meant fewer courses overall and no place for the coastal circuits. The game's digital speech was also changed from the Oliver's own voice to that of Melody White.

But why the change of name? "When *Jet Bike Simulator* was in development, we had debated calling it *Jet Ski Simulator* as this was another popular name used for personal watercraft," says Philip. "But our previous game was *Pro Ski Simulator* and we didn't want any confusion on buyer's order forms. When we needed a refreshed brand name, it felt like enough time had passed to be able to use the words 'jet ski.'"



"WE RETURNED TO WORKING CRAZY HOURS IN MY BEDROOM-CUM-OFFICE MAKING THIS GAME"
PHILIP OLIVER



» Having two cassettes in the box was an attempt by Codemasters to show buyers were getting value for money.

320x200 pixels. Although it constrained the game to four colours as opposed to the 16 available in Mode 0, this approach made it easier to port the game to the Spectrum. "We developed all our games on the Amstrad CPC and we had a great setup with disk drives," says Philip. "It was easier to create more colourful graphics on the CPC which improved morale during development."

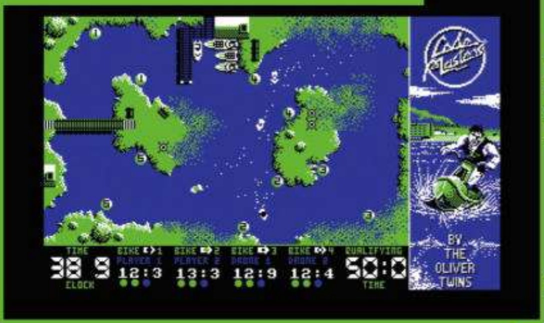
Despite feeling constrained, there was still room for a few flourishes. Although the Olivers didn't need to pay special attention to the physics of the water, "The game was running on computers with Z80 chips that ran at 3.5MHz, meaning it was very difficult to do many calculations or move many pixels around the screen," Philip says, they did add a greater feel of movement. "The particle effect behind the jet bikes was added to give the suggestion of spray."

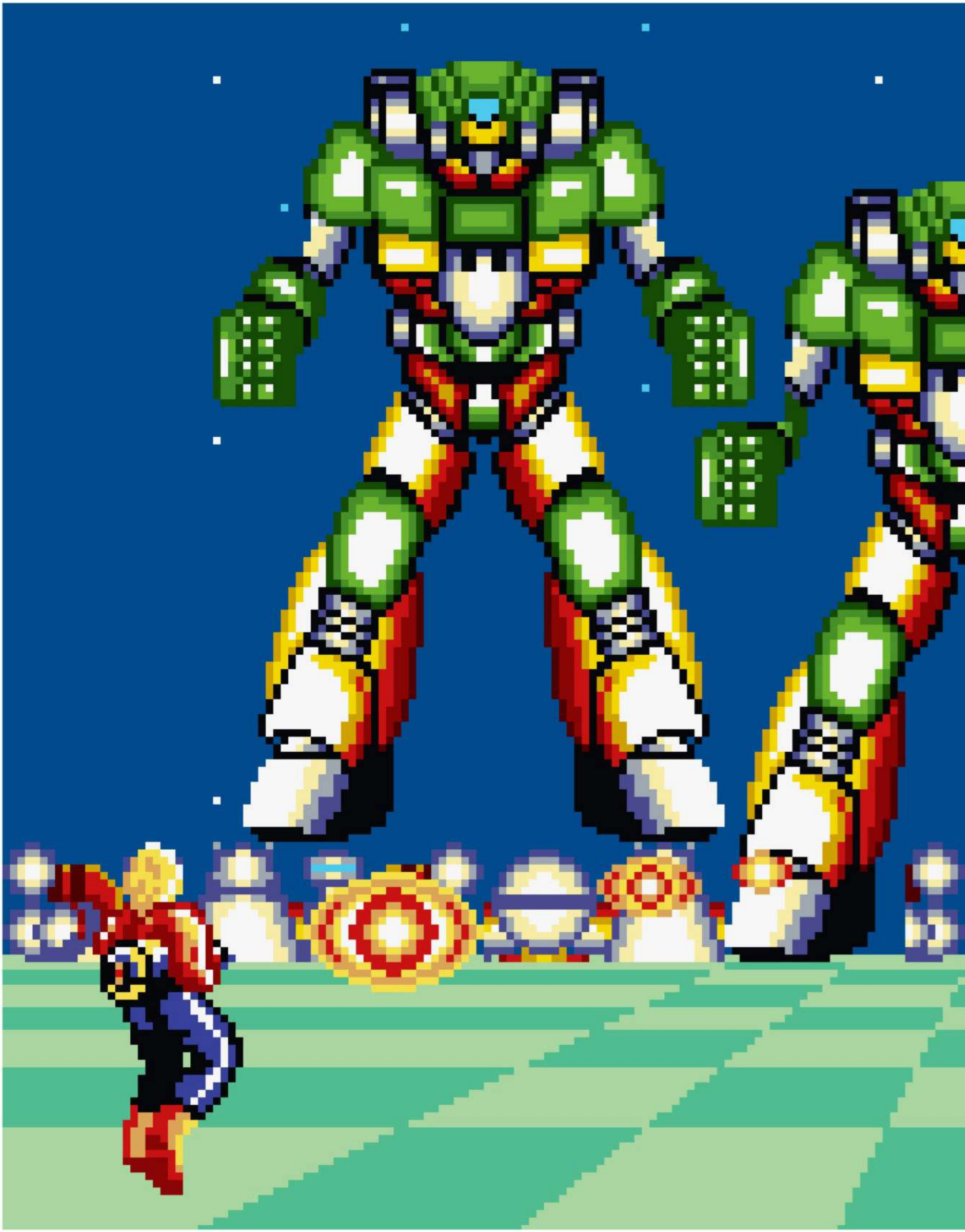
The Olivers also made the Spectrum version. "During the final days of development, we converted the graphics to work well on the Spectrum, which we'd link to one of our two Amstrads," Philip recalls. Work on the Commodore 64 version was outsourced, however, and a developer called Mark Clements converted the code and graphics from the Olivers' work. "We believe it was a close copy, since we delivered all the code and graphics to the developer but we were so busy on our next games we never saw or played it," Philip says.

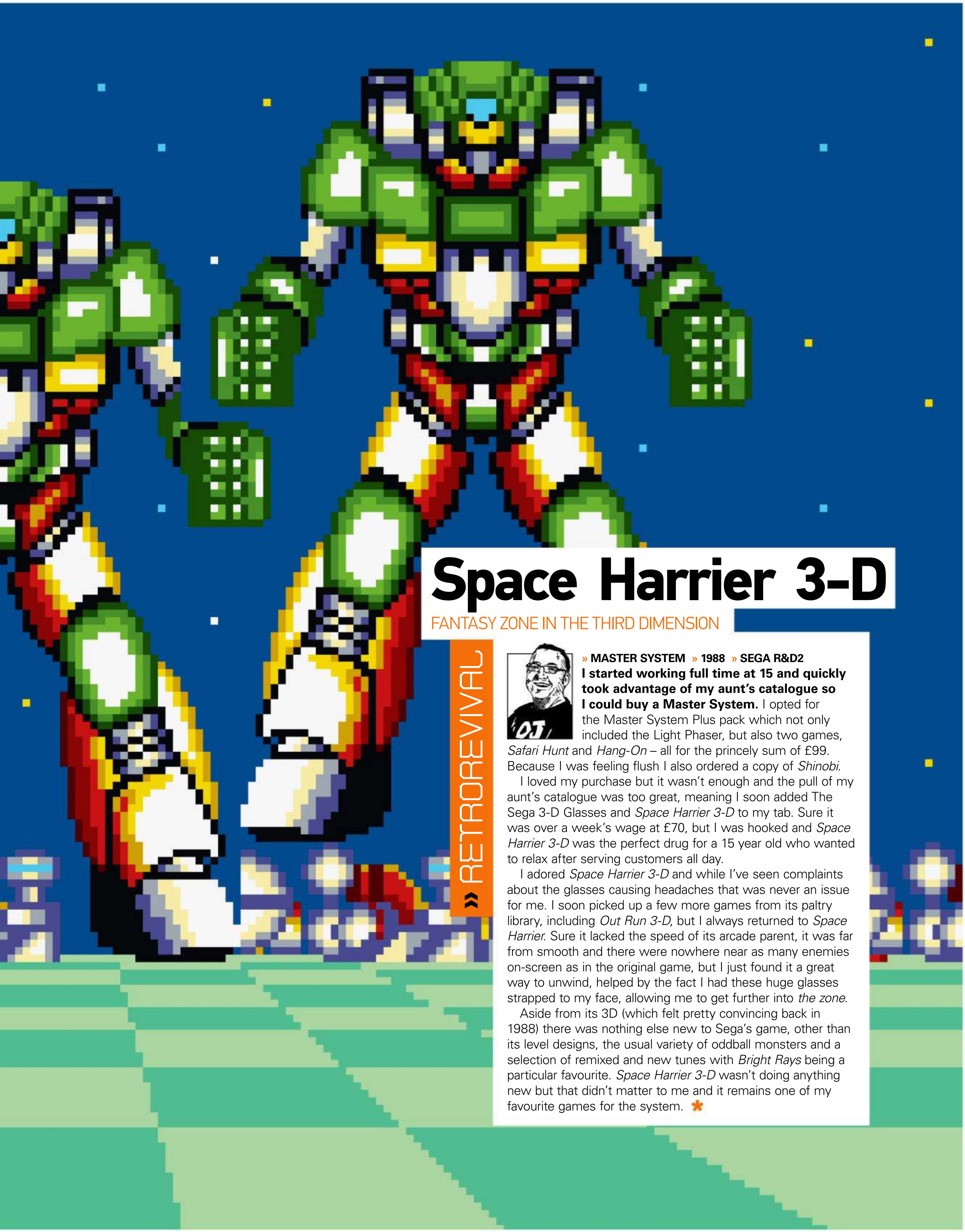
The game didn't get an Atari ST or Amiga release. It also sold fewer copies than Codemasters had been anticipating due, in large part, to the higher price of the Codemasters Plus release. The game was re-released a year later as *Championship Jet Ski Simulator*, however, albeit with a few tweaks and the Olivers remain very proud of their work.

"The game ROM with code, graphics, audio and tracks is around 37K – that's equivalent to two seconds of an MP3 audio file," he says. "You could look at this another way. A modern smartphone takes pictures at 12MP so the memory used by one average phone picture is equivalent to about 75 *Jet Bike Simulator* ROMS! What we could achieve back then was incredible." ✱

» [Amstrad CPC] Since each of the bikes were shaped like an arrow, it was easier to see which way you were going.







Space Harrier 3-D

FANTASY ZONE IN THE THIRD DIMENSION

» RETROREVIVAL

» MASTER SYSTEM » 1988 » SEGA R&D2

I started working full time at 15 and quickly took advantage of my aunt's catalogue so I could buy a Master System. I opted for the Master System Plus pack which not only included the Light Phaser, but also two games, *Safari Hunt* and *Hang-On* – all for the princely sum of £99. Because I was feeling flush I also ordered a copy of *Shinobi*.

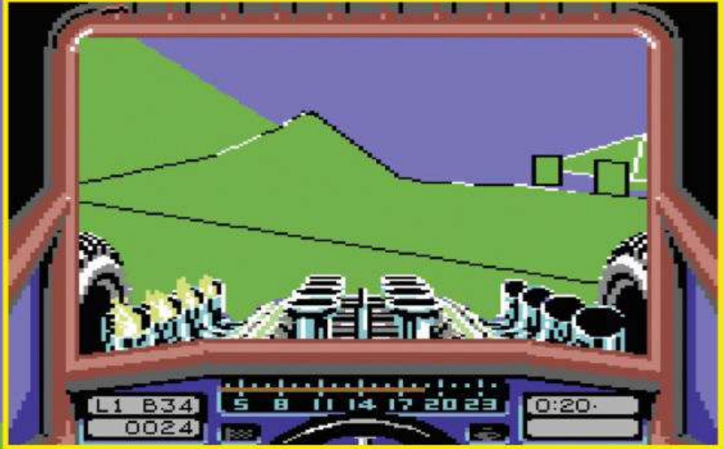
I loved my purchase but it wasn't enough and the pull of my aunt's catalogue was too great, meaning I soon added The Sega 3-D Glasses and *Space Harrier 3-D* to my tab. Sure it was over a week's wage at £70, but I was hooked and *Space Harrier 3-D* was the perfect drug for a 15 year old who wanted to relax after serving customers all day.

I adored *Space Harrier 3-D* and while I've seen complaints about the glasses causing headaches that was never an issue for me. I soon picked up a few more games from its paltry library, including *Out Run 3-D*, but I always returned to *Space Harrier*. Sure it lacked the speed of its arcade parent, it was far from smooth and there were nowhere near as many enemies on-screen as in the original game, but I just found it a great way to unwind, helped by the fact I had these huge glasses strapped to my face, allowing me to get further into *the zone*.

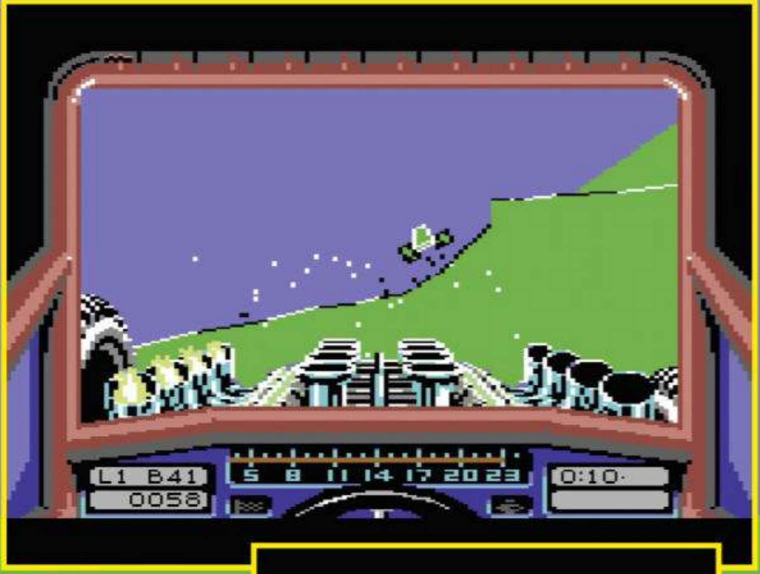
Aside from its 3D (which felt pretty convincing back in 1988) there was nothing else new to Sega's game, other than its level designs, the usual variety of oddball monsters and a selection of remixed and new tunes with *Bright Rays* being a particular favourite. *Space Harrier 3-D* wasn't doing anything new but that didn't matter to me and it remains one of my favourite games for the system. ✱

ULTIMATE GUIDE

STUNT CAR RACER



» [C64] *Stunt Car Racer*'s courses have narrow sections, where you have to squeeze past your rival.



OF ALL GEOFF CRAMMOND'S CELEBRATED 3D GAMING EXPERIENCES, STUNT CAR RACER IS ARGUABLY THE MOST FUN. RETRO GAMER IS YOUR NAVIGATOR, AS YOUR VEHICLE IS WINCHED ONTO THE STARTING LINE OF HIS DAREDEVIL RACING TITLE

WORDS BY RORY MILNE

When Geoff Crammond left university in the mid-Seventies there was no such thing as a home computer. It wasn't until six years after he graduated that they first started to appear, at which point he bought himself a BBC Micro. After developing a version of *Space Invaders* for the system, which was published as *Super Invaders*, he focussed on creating games set in 3D worlds, including the combat flight simulator *Aviator*, the racing game *Revs* and the strategy title *The Sentinel*.

Given that all of his three-dimensional projects had been number-one hits, Geoff naturally moved onto designing a fourth game depicted in 3D, initially for the C64. Fans of his previous work knew nothing of his plans, however, as he kept his next project quiet, and his publisher MicroProse followed suit by not briefing the gaming press about what he was working on.

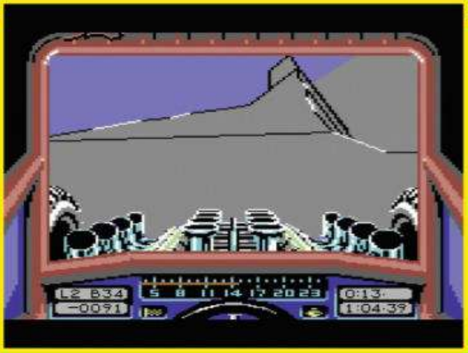
Behind closed doors, Geoff came up with a prototype that would lead to a design that was part racer, part roller-coaster ride. Initially, however, this work in progress had the potential to be a shoot-'em-up, possibly involving tanks battling each other across its rough terrain. This uneven ground happened to be randomly generated, and while playtesting, Geoff spotted a small hill. When he drove over it, the thrill of flying through the air gave him an idea: his project's core objective should be speeding over ramps. So he levelled its undulating playfield, and peppered it with jumps. Then because these were widely dispersed, and therefore tricky to find, he linked them together to form a track, and then raised this high off the ground to provide motivation to stay on the course.

What followed was a marathon of a development rather than a sprint, and by the time of its completion, Geoff's latest effort – a daredevil driving title called *Stunt Car Racer* – had taken over two years of hard graft. But when it was released in late-1989, its sky-high ratings in magazine reviews and its position at the top of the charts made clear that its lengthy development had been time well spent.

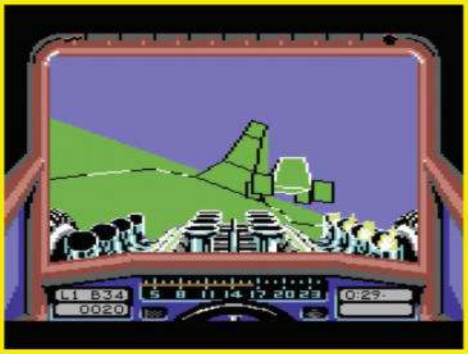
Because of the C64's relatively slow processor, *Stunt Car Racer* pitted players against just one AI opponent in each race, selected from leagues of increasingly skilled computer-controlled contestants, each with their own distinct characteristics.

Competitors in racing games had almost always been anonymous up to this point, but the rival drivers in *Stunt Car Racer* had humorous names that gave the player clues about their driving styles. For example, Road Hog was a pain to overtake, and Bully Boy wasn't shy

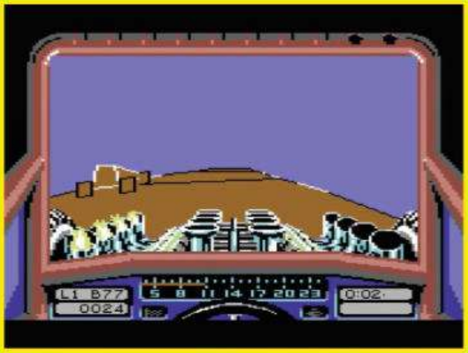
> "I HAD WRITTEN STUFF FOR THE SPECTRUM BEFORE, SO MICROPROSE ASKED IF I WOULD BE INTERESTED. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FUN, SO I WENT FOR IT"
> **PETE COOKE**



» [C64] Part of *Stunt Car Racer*'s challenge is that its tracks twist and turn when least expected.



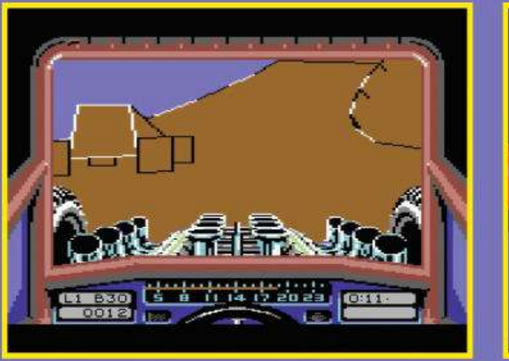
» [C64] When you jump ramps in *Stunt Car Racer* position your car in the centre of the course.



» [C64] The well-named Roller-Coaster track in *Stunt Car Racer* starts with a near-vertical ascent.

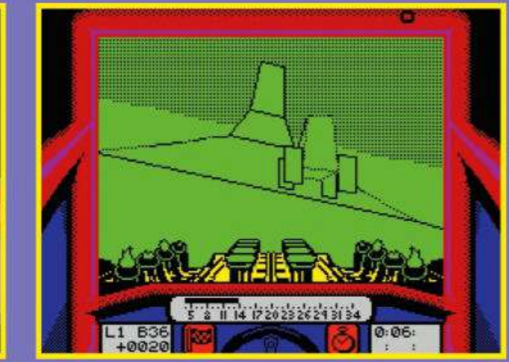
CONVERSION CAPERS

HOW THE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF STUNT CAR RACER COMPARE



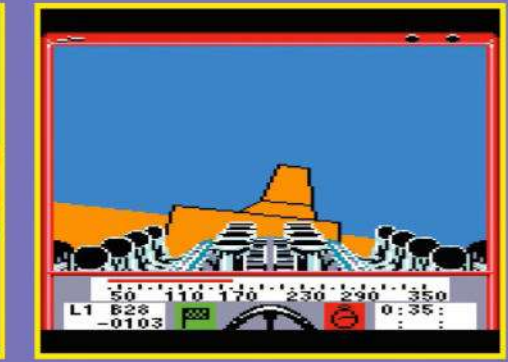
C64

■ The C64 original feels pretty realistic while allowing you to pull off stunts that are anything but. Its lack of music somehow helps its true-to-life credentials, as does its convincing depiction of driving at speed. Its levels are nicely varied and get increasingly hard.



ZX SPECTRUM

■ Play the 128K version, its sound effects are far better than its 48K equivalent, although not quite as good as the C64 original. The Spectrum conversion is monochrome, but its skies are patterned to differentiate them from its courses, and it plays just like the original.



AMSTRAD CPC

■ Far from a lazy port of the Spectrum game, the Amstrad *Stunt Car Racer* uses the system's 16-colour mode to provide it with multicolour tracks rendered in numerous different colour schemes. Otherwise, it sounds and plays like the Spectrum 128 game and runs just as quickly.

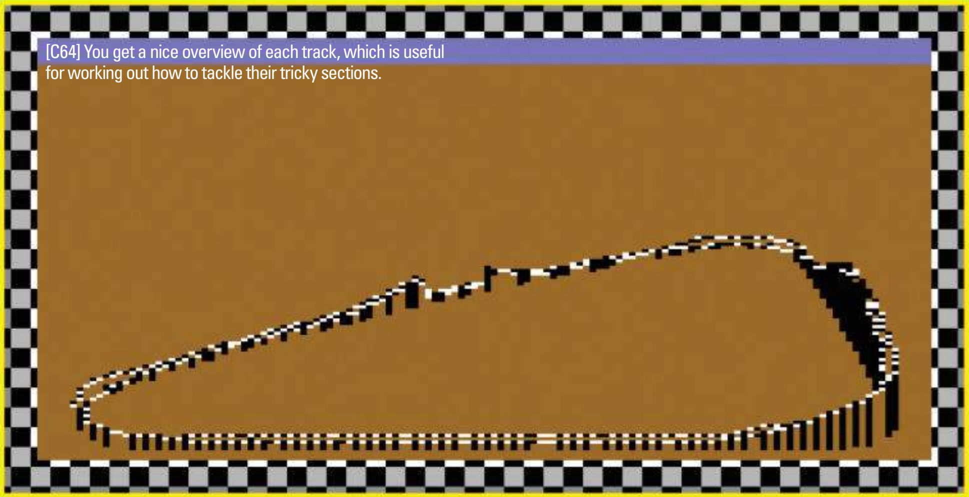
▶ about knocking his rivals off the track. To free players from focussing on maintaining racing lines, the bends of the courses in *Stunt Car Racer* were banked, so that the main consideration was judging how fast you could take them without launching off their raised sides.

As if to spice up *Stunt Car Racer*'s gameplay further, its vehicles had a limited boost, but far from being a novelty, this was integral to winning races. More specifically, boosting aided attempts to reach the top speeds required to jump certain gaps, and it often proved essential when trying to catch-up with opponents after falling behind them.

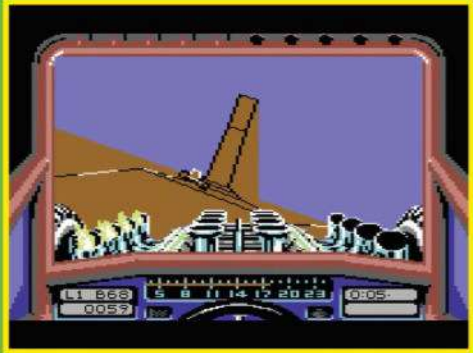
In order to provide variety and replay value, *Stunt Car Racer* boasted eight distinct track designs, with each providing a stiffer challenge and more impressive setpieces than the last. The latter took their lead from the wildest roller-coasters imaginable, incorporating everything from nerve-shredding hairpin bends to near-vertical declines. Then as if to outdo the most outrageous of theme-park rides, one of the tougher courses tested players with speeding over a moving drawbridge.

The game's difficulty was further increased by the fact that the amount of damage that players could inflict on their vehicles was limited. An ingenious damage meter depicted this wear and tear, in the form of an ever-lengthening crack in the car's chassis. Once it spanned its entire length it was race over. The crumpled wreck would then be repaired for future races, but with a hole drilled to the right of its frame, effectively reducing the space where subsequent damage could be recorded before another race was declared over.

However, *Stunt Car Racer*'s vehicles were designed to be as tough as the tanks that the game was originally going to be based around, and so falls from its sky-high courses didn't immediately result in them being towed to the scrap heap. Instead, carelessly skidding or flying off the tracks resulted in the speeding metal hulks getting slowly winched back up and into the race, which of course was time that the player's opponent could use to get as far ahead of them as possible.



[C64] You get a nice overview of each track, which is useful for working out how to tackle their tricky sections.

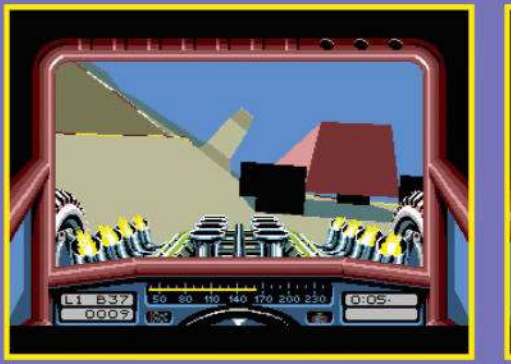


» [C64] Adding to *Stunt Car Racer*'s thrill-ride credentials is that it has a course with a drawbridge.

This set of skillfully balanced mechanics coupled with *Stunt Car Racer*'s impressive depiction of breakneck speed and hair-raising stunts all but guaranteed that the 3D stunt-based racer would get adapted from the C64 to other systems. Around the same time that it came out on the Commodore 64, a highly regarded Spectrum conversion of the game was released, thanks to noted Z80 coder Pete Cooke.

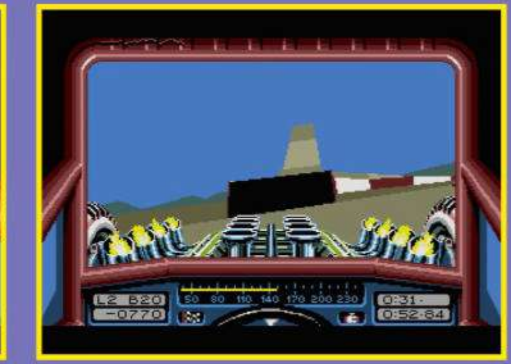
Enhanced versions for the ST and Amiga arrived not long after, both developed by Geoff. As well as more detailed backgrounds than those in the original, these 16-bit iterations also incorporated comical visual depictions of their competitors. They also allowed owners of either system to link-up their computers and run two-player races. These head-to-head competitions allowed each player to use their own controls in front of their own screen, which at the time was an almost unheard of option for a racing game – even those found in arcades.

The following year, there was an Amstrad conversion of *Stunt Car Racer*, also by Pete Cooke, and a DOS version by Tim Ansell. In keeping with the earlier adaptations, these latest iterations reviewed well and won plaudits from gamers.



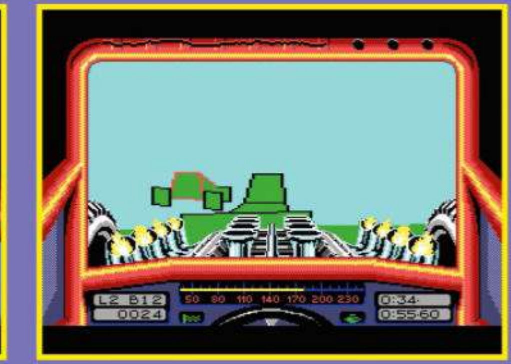
AMIGA

■ You see shots of your rivals and a detailed overview of the next track pre-game. In-game, the Amiga title's courses are two-toned and have backdrops. It sounds better and is faster than the C64 game, and has a multiplayer mode where you link up to a second Amiga.



ATARI ST

■ Absolutely identical to the Amiga conversion, aside from its sound effects, which nevertheless do the job perfectly well. Like its Amiga counterpart, the ST *Stunt Car Racer* has a more colourful, more detailed dashboard than the C64 original's, and static post-race scenes.



PC

■ A combination of a less colourful version of the Amiga game's pre and post-game presentation and a more colourful version of the original's in-game visuals. The PC *Stunt Car Racer* is pretty fast, even on a modest DOS setup, but it's far from the best-sounding adaptation.

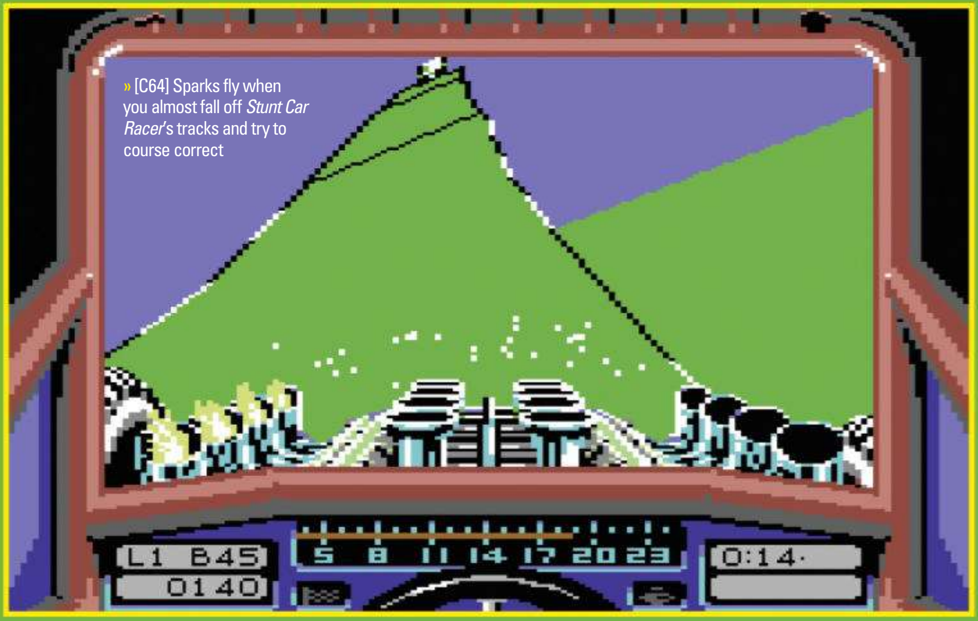
> "OBVIOUSLY THE AMSTRAD HAD BETTER SOUND AND PROPER COLOURS, SO HAVING MULTIPLE COLOUR COMBINATIONS FOR THE LEVELS WAS EASY TO DO"
> **PETE COOKE**

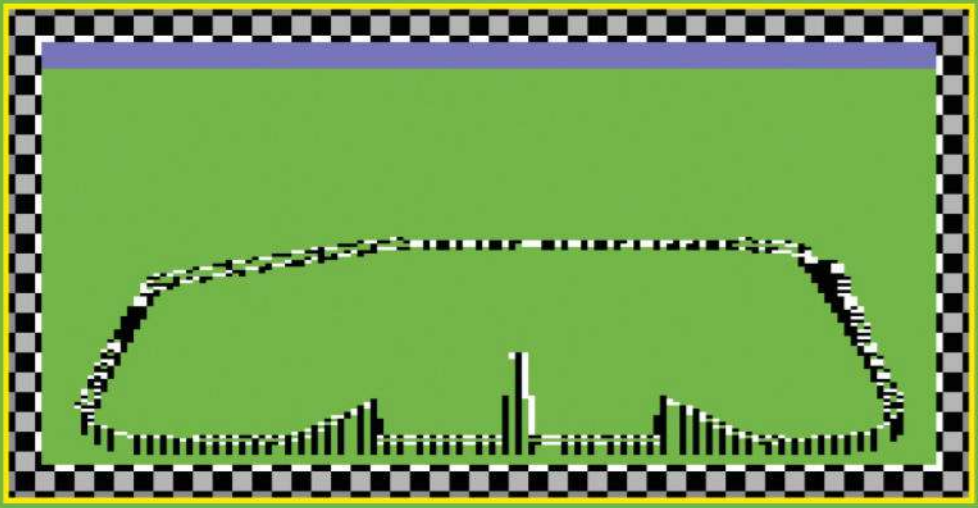
A NES *Stunt Car Racer* was developed soon after, a third take on the game by Pete Cooke, but although he completed the project it was sadly never released.

After Geoff had finished work on his 16-bit versions of *Stunt Car Racer*, he next developed the groundbreaking F1 title *Formula One Grand Prix*, which led on to him creating the highly successful *Grand Prix* series. Then following the conclusion of the franchise in 2002, he decided to revisit *Stunt Car Racer*, working in collaboration with a developer called Lost Toys.

Their sequel was planned for the PS2, Xbox and PC, and in addition to far superior graphics, *Stunt Car Racer Pro* was going to one-up the original by supporting multiple drivers on-screen and online play. But despite its obvious merits, a publisher couldn't be found, and so the follow-up didn't get past the prototype stage. Lost Toys closed its doors soon after finishing work on this proof of concept, and although Geoff persevered with a second team for a year, the ambitious sequel was ultimately cancelled.

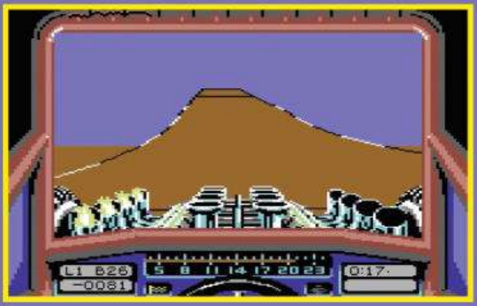
His original game is still a joy to play however. It's realistic enough that you feel like you're really behind the wheel of a speeding hunk of metal on treacherous, twisted tracks, and yet it's forgiving enough that you never feel overly frustrated. Above all, it's still a hell of a ride. ✱

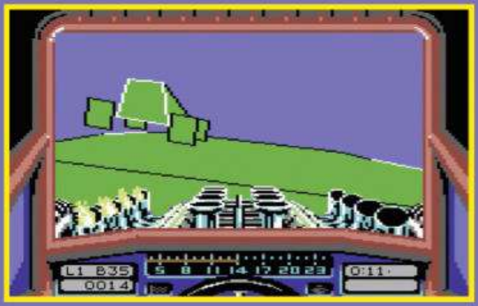

» [C64] Sparks fly when you almost fall off *Stunt Car Racer*'s tracks and try to course correct

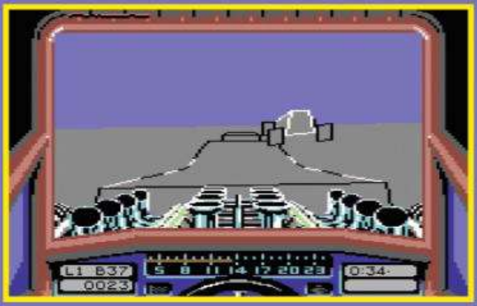


TRACK GUIDE

TOP TIPS FOR TACKLING STUNT CAR RACER'S COURSES







THE LITTLE RAMP

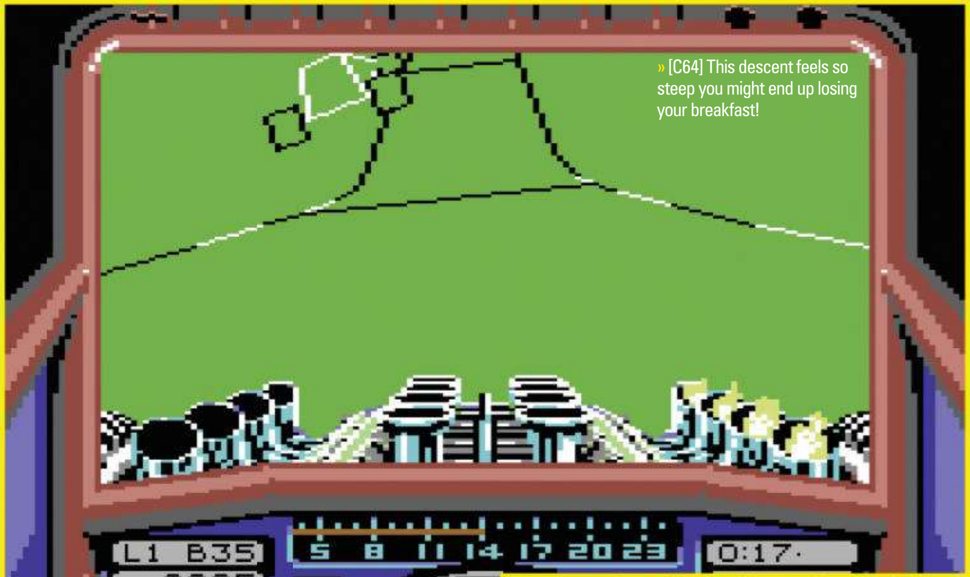
■ Get up to full speed on the long straight by boosting, then slow down coming out of the banked corner. Speed up to clear the gap, then after landing get back up to medium speed before the second corner. Keep dead centre while leaping the second gap and going over the hill.

THE HUMP BACK

■ You need three-quarters speed on the opening left bank to sail over the hump back hill. Keep a steady pace on the next corner and twin hills, then zoom up and down the steep ascent and descent. Take it easy on the last left as there's a nasty gap just after, then an S-bend.

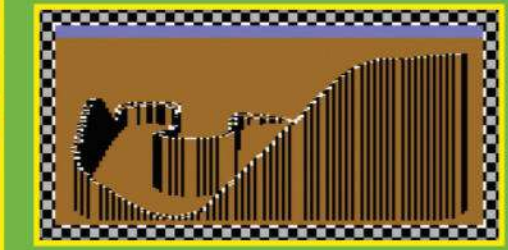
THE STEPPING STONES

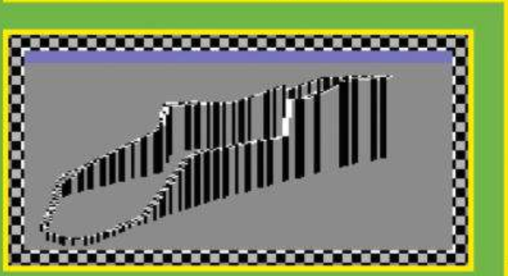
■ Keep a medium speed on the bumpy start, then speed up for the right bank and steep hill. Slow down to medium for the next right and the stepping stones, for which you need to be in the centre of the track. Pick up the pace for the next right, steep descent and final right.

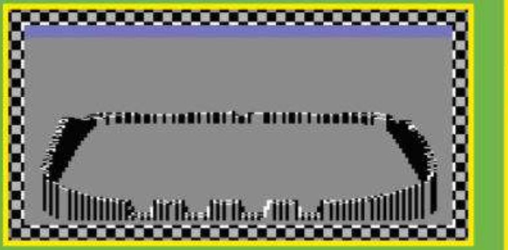


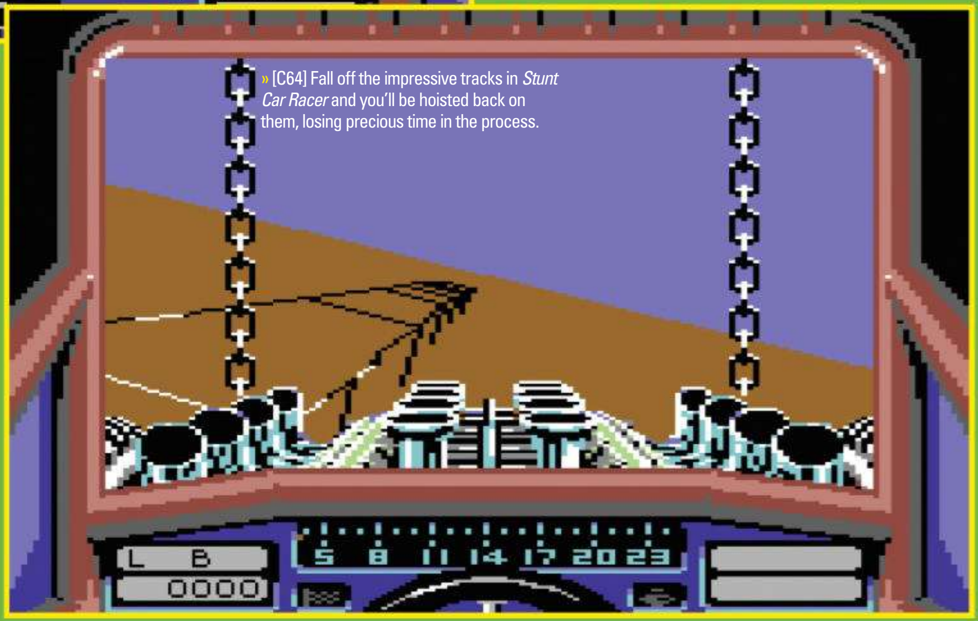
» [C64] This descent feels so steep you might end up losing your breakfast!

> "THE NES HAD A HACKED 6502 CHIP, SO THAT MADE THINGS A BIT EASIER, BUT IT WAS A RIGHT HACK TO GET IT ON THE CONSOLE"
> **PETE COOKE**

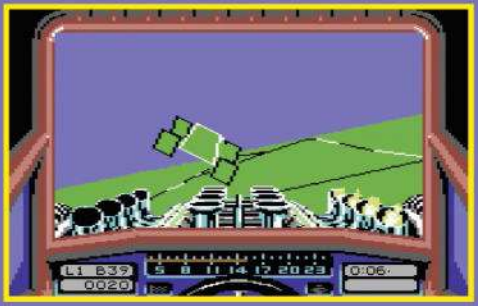






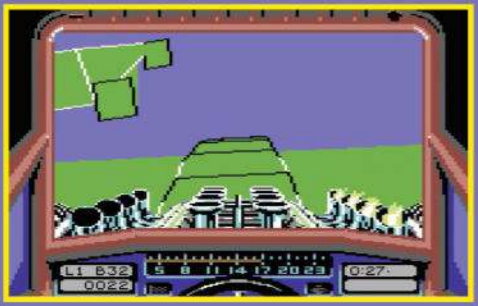


» [C64] Fall off the impressive tracks in *Stunt Car Racer* and you'll be hoisted back on them, losing precious time in the process.



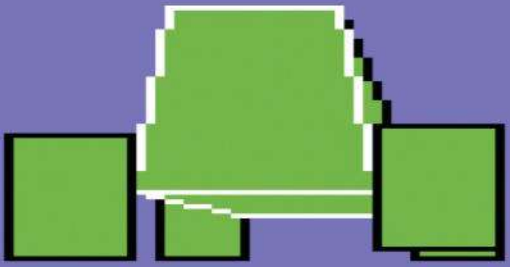
THE BIG RAMP

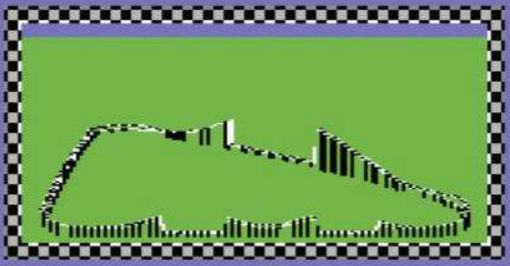
■ Keep a central position through the left/right banks, then pick up speed along the gentle left to clear the gap after the hill. Jump the next hill and the gap after. Pick up speed around the left bank and motor up the steep hill, then leap the big gap before the last left.



THE HIGH JUMP

■ Accelerate as fast as possible around the gentle left and up the big jump to clear the gaping chasm beyond. Build up your speed on the next left to jump the two hills and the dip between them, then tear up the gentle lefts and short straights leading to the last left bank.





DEVELOPER Q&A

PETE COOKE ON ADAPTING STUNT CAR RACER FOR THE SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD AND NES

How did you end up converting *Stunt Car Racer* to the Spectrum?
MicroProse approached me directly. I had told some of the guys who worked there that I loved *Revs*, and obviously I had written stuff for the Spectrum before, so MicroProse asked if I would be interested. It showed me *Stunt Car Racer*, and I thought, "Wow! That looks good!" I thought it would be fun to do, so I went for it. Then I got in touch with Geoff.

What sort of assets did he give you?
He gave me the lot: the source code, the data and the track structures, because writing the Spectrum version from scratch would have been impossible. The big job was that Geoff's code was 6502, and the Z80 was a very different chip. He had written it very specifically to maximise the C64's capabilities. Geoff had structured the data so that it would be most efficient on a 6502, but that meant that it was a nightmare getting it working on the Spectrum.

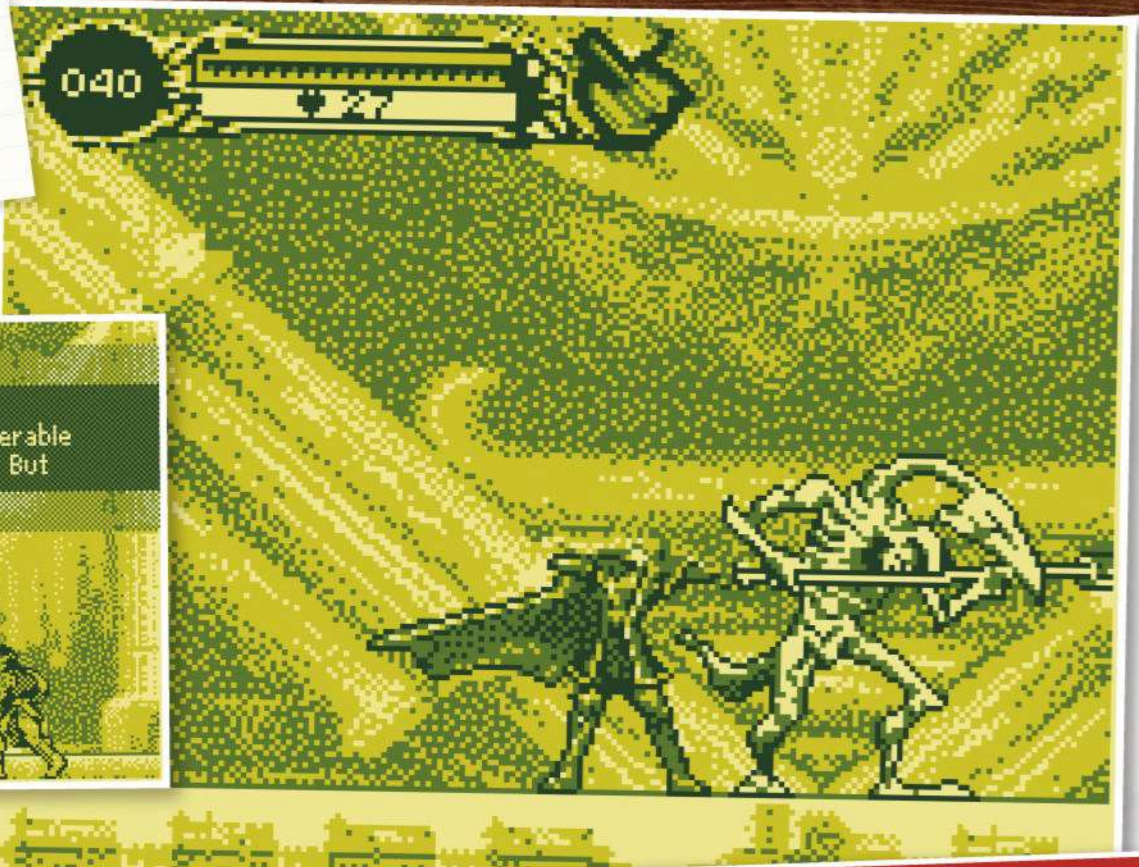
What sorts of concessions did you make?
The way it sounded was a shame, because the Spectrum's audio capabilities were absolutely awful compared to the C64, and of course using sound on the Spectrum was using up processor time. So it was a question of finding the absolute minimum we could get away with that sounded like something recognisable without slowing the game down too much. But I remember the game got a fair bit of praise, and Geoff was very pleased with it. He was impressed I had gotten my head around this stuff.

How was converting *Stunt Car Racer* from the Spectrum to the Amstrad?
The Amstrad's CPU was faster than the Spectrum's, but obviously there was more screen to write to, so that would have been slower. But with the Amstrad having a Z80 processor you were really 80% of the way there already. So you could really focus on the areas where the machine was different. Obviously the Amstrad had better sound and proper colours, so having multiple colour combinations for the levels was easy to do.

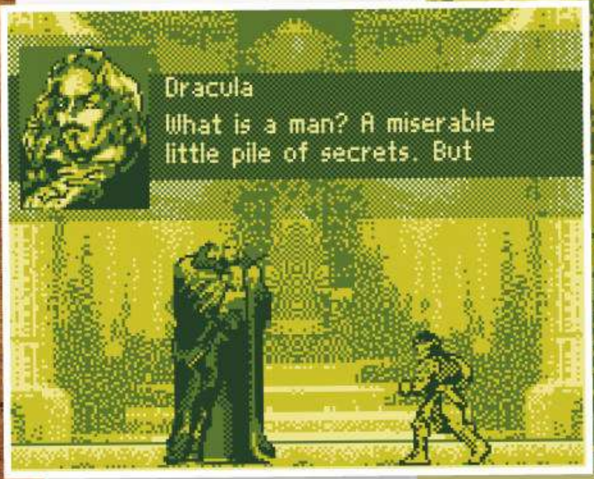
What about your unreleased NES version?
The NES had a hacked 6502 chip, so that made things a bit easier, but it was a right hack to get it on the console. Some guy made a special board that allowed me to write it, but then Nintendo thought it wouldn't bother releasing it. I think it decided it didn't fit with the kind of games people were playing on the console. It was a shame, because it was really good.

How did *Stunt Car Racer* influence the next steps you took in the games industry?
It led to me working on *Grand Prix*. At an early stage I was approached by MicroProse, who showed me what Geoff was doing with that. I thought, "Bloody hell! Yes!" So I ended up working with him for a long time on that series, all because of the first contact though *Stunt Car Racer*.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO... GAMES THAT NEVER SAW THE LIGHT OF DAY



» [Game.com] Yes, Dracula's infamous line is present, though it loses something without the voice acting.



Dracula

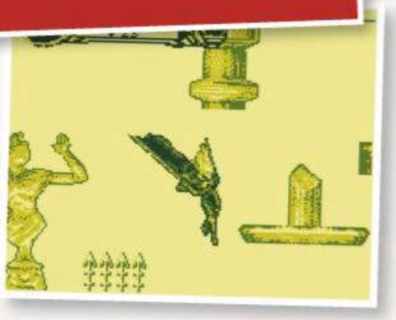
What is a man? A miserable little pile of secrets. But

» [Game.com] Even the boss battles are accounted for, which is genuinely rather impressive.

CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

A version of Konami's classic was set to terrorise the most unlikely of platforms, but received a stake in the heart before it could draw blood

Words by Nick Thorpe



IN THE KNOW

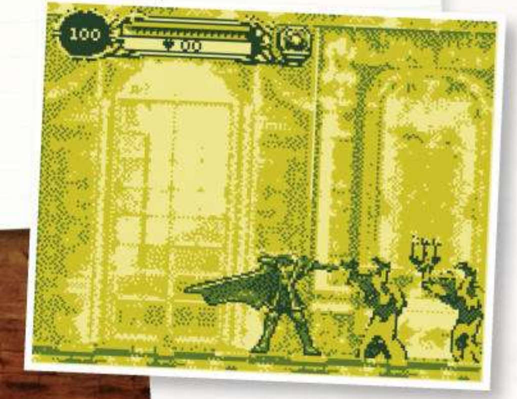
» **PUBLISHER:** TIGER ELECTRONICS

» **DEVELOPER:** TIGER ELECTRONICS

» **SYSTEM:** GAME.COM

» **DUE FOR RELEASE:** 1999

» [Game.com] Defeating these zombies is tougher than it should be due to shoddy collision detection.



The Game.com is one of the more intriguing failures in gaming history. Although the system is now renowned for its poor-quality games and practically unusable display, Tiger's assessment that there was space for a new handheld in 1997 was actually quite astute. The Game Boy was old and other competitors had left the sector, while the Game.com could boast advanced features including internet connectivity. What's more, because of its existing business relationships with major publishers, Tiger could boast big names like *Duke Nukem*, *Mortal Kombat*, *Resident Evil* and *Sonic*.

Tiger was bought by Hasbro Interactive in 1998, and Hasbro had a working relationship with Konami as the two companies had released the PlayStation version of *Frogger*. While a Game.com version of the classic arcade game did eventually see release, that wasn't the only Konami game in the works for the ill-fated handheld. Tiger showed off Game.com versions of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* at E3 in May 1999, and an October 1999 press release stated that both were due for release in November as part of a holiday season line-up including *Holyfield Championship Boxing*, *Madden Football*, *WCW Whiplash* and *Furbyland*.

Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night ultimately never saw release, but that wasn't really anything to do with the game itself. The market opportunity Tiger saw in 1997 was no longer present – the Game Boy Color and *Pokémon* had reaffirmed Nintendo's dominance of the sector, while Game.com sales had been slow and the system somewhat neglected in 1998. An attempt was made to pivot the format to a budget audience, with the revised Game.com Pocket Pro hardware launching for a $29.99 price tag in June 1999. It's safe to say that this didn't have the desired effect, as not a single game from the holiday software range was released – Tiger had abandoned the platform without so much as an announcement.

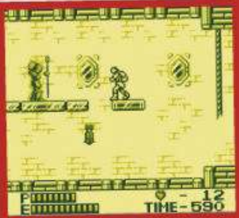
For many years, fans could only speculate on what the handheld adaptation of Alucard's adventure would have been like, based on a very limited number of screenshots released by Tiger. That speculation

BLOOD RELATIVES

CASTLEVANIA II: BELMONT'S REVENGE

1991, KONAMI

■ This is a linear adventure rather than a Metroidvania like *Symphony Of The Night*, but if you're looking for a greyscale handheld rendition of *Castlevania*, this is the best of the Game Boy outings.



CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

1997, KONAMI

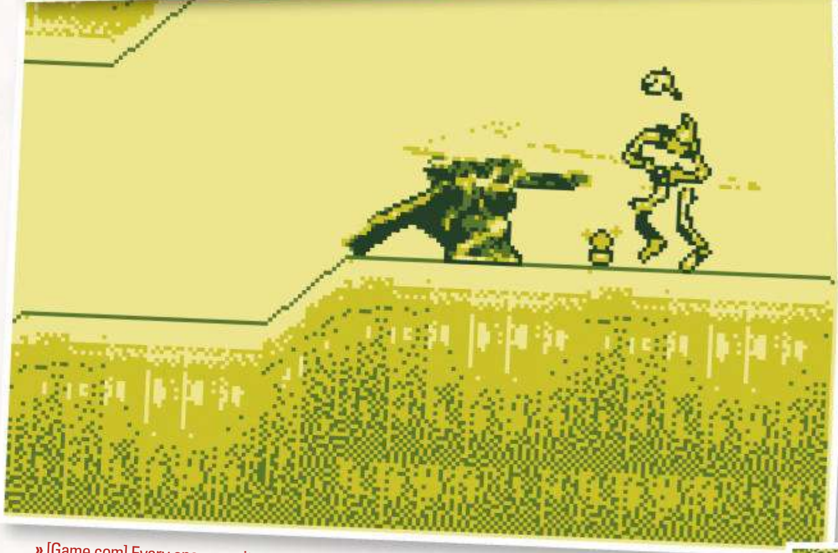
■ Thankfully, the inspiration for the Game.com port did hit the market, though high prices for the PlayStation and Saturn versions may mean you'll look towards digital releases on modern platforms.

Dracula
What is a man? A miserable little pile of secrets.

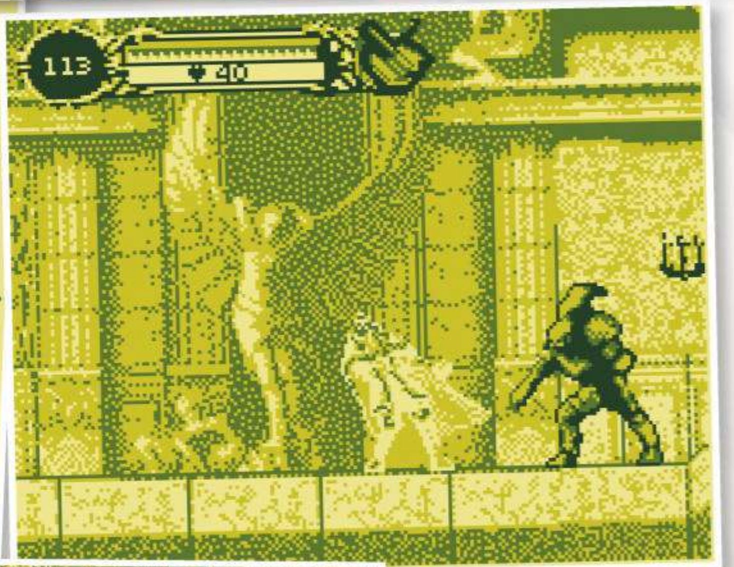
CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW

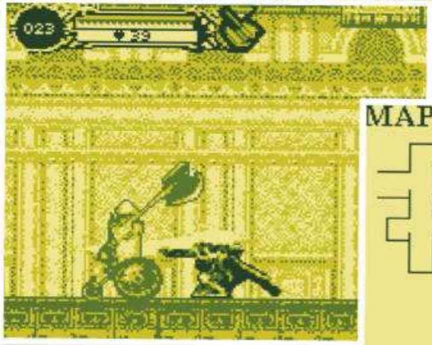
2003, KONAMI

■ This critically acclaimed Game Boy Advance adventure has both the Metroidvania structure and portability. It's another expensive game, so consider *Castlevania Advance Collection* if you're looking for it.



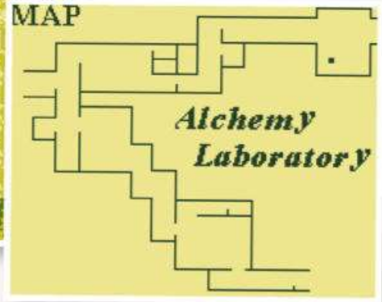
» [Game.com] Every enemy emits a generic sampled grunt sound upon defeat, which is quite irritating.





» [Game.com] It can be quite hard to make out what's going on in the more-detailed scenes.

» [Game.com] This map serves to show how surprisingly faithful this version's castle layout is.



was put to rest in 2022, when the prototype preservation group Hidden Palace released a ROM image of the game.

The big surprise was that the developers appeared to be trying a faithful conversion of the PlayStation game, rather than a scaled-back adaptation. The map, the room layouts and the enemies are carried across as faithfully as possible, including the inverted castle, and Alucard can be equipped in exactly the same way. Alucard's wolf form isn't included, nor is the fight between Richter Belmont and Dracula available, though the cutscene associated with it is. It's unknown as to whether these features were not planned for inclusion or simply not finished, but the prototype can be played from start to finish.

There are drawbacks to the game's faithfulness to the source material though. The greyscale renditions of those familiar backgrounds can be quite impressive to look at, but the detail proves to be a disadvantage once they start scrolling due to the ghosting of the Game.com's display. There are areas with far less background detail, and it's far easier to make out Alucard and objects in these scenes. The size of the game would also have been an issue, as the lack of any save memory facility also meant that the handheld version of *Symphony Of The Night* would have used password saves.

Other factors conspire to ensure that the prototype isn't much fun to play, including some truly dreadful audio. While it's tempting to chalk that up to the game's unfinished nature, this was a common problem on the Game.com. Poor collision routines make both combat and platforming a chore too, as Alucard's sword doesn't always hit enemies it visually touches, and touching a platform from the side halts his upward momentum. These issues could potentially have been remedied prior to release, though sadly we'll never know.

It's a shame that *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* was never completed, as it is considerably more ambitious than the majority of Game.com games. Though some of its problems are inherent to the hardware, if the collision issues in the prototype had been fixable, it could have been a good game for a system that sorely needed quality software. Thankfully we've still got the original game to enjoy. *

> "There are areas with far less background detail, and it's far easier to make out Alucard and objects in these scenes"

SIDE
Studio Profile
Low Noise
60
30 Minutes per side

STUDIO PROFILE

Twilight

Twilight was formed when a group of programmers and graphic artists split from Harrogate-based developer and publisher Enigma Variations. They went on to produce games for many UK publishers and affect a change in British Law thanks to a chicken

WORDS BY RICHARD HEWISON

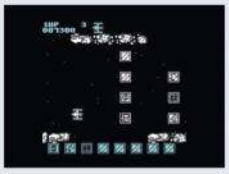
» The Twilight team in a typical early Nineties-style group photoshoot, windswept and contemplating games.

"Enigma Variations was only ever going to be producing endless budget licensed games written to a very tight schedule, with no apparent aspirations beyond that," says programmer Andy Swann. Although that situation would change at Enigma shortly after they left, the core group of developers working there were feeling more disgruntled as the months went by. The general unhappy situation came to a head in early 1990, and Andy Swann, Jason McGann, Peter Tattersall, and Stuart Cook left and formed a new development team, reuniting with former Enigma programmer Mark Mason. "It was a time when employment was fairly easy, but I had moved to England from Aberdeen and it was still a big risk," says Stuart, also a programmer. "We used our industry contacts when thankfully there was a lot of work going around and not too many ready-made development teams about."

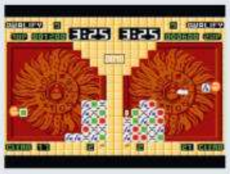
Twilight was officially born on 1 May 1990, and Andy recalls how they came up with the name for their new company. "We sat about trying to think of something. There was a lull in the conversation and Pete started humming the *Twilight Zone* theme tune!" With the name agreed, Peter created the first logo, inspired by the art of Roger Dean. "It was barely legible, but Pete liked it because he could pack it into not many pixels on the Commodore 64," says Andy.

The group avowed to do more than quickly churned-out budget-price licensed titles, by firstly writing even more quickly produced budget-price licensed titles. "They at least allowed us to get some money in the bank, then we planned to do arcade conversions and design our own games," explains Andy. The team began operating from a rented mid-

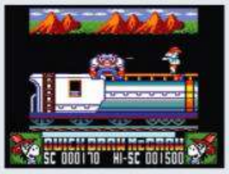
GAMES TO DISCOVER



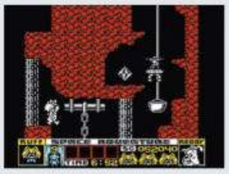
DELTA CHARGE
ZX SPECTRUM, 1990
■ A decent scrolling shooter based on the Commodore 64 original from the talented Stavros Fasoulas.



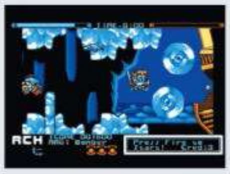
PLOTTING
AMSTRAD GX4000, 1990
■ A simple but addictive coin-op puzzler, complete with a two-player option on the Amstrad GX4000 console.



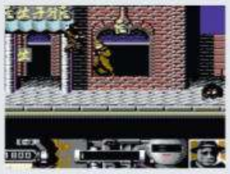
QUICK DRAW MCGRAW
COMMODORE 64, 1991
■ Set on a moving train being robbed, with gameplay inspired by *Rolling Thunder*.



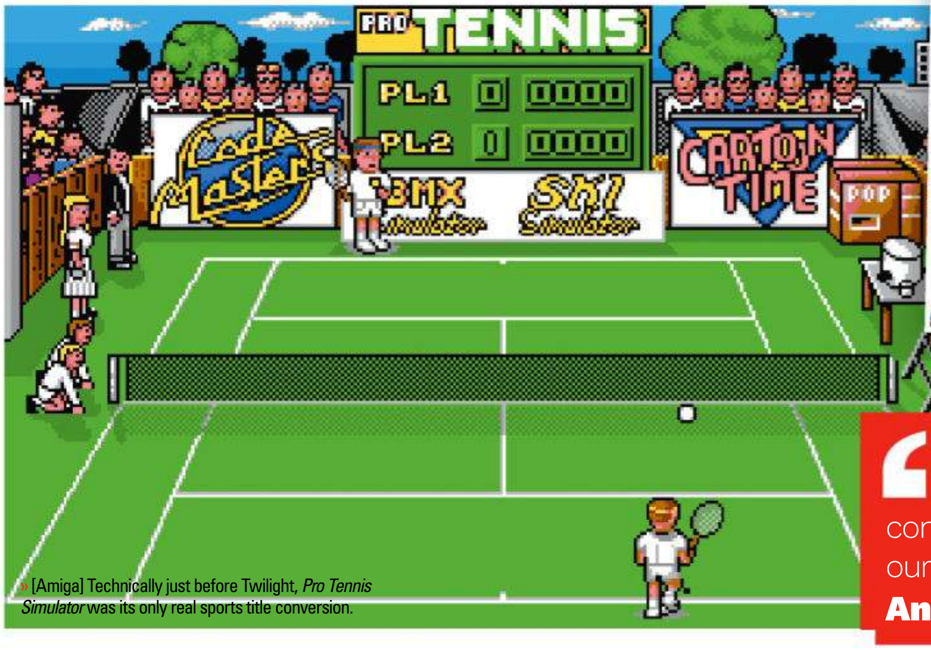
RUFF AND REDDY IN THE SPACE ADVENTURE
ZX SPECTRUM, 1990
■ A charming platform game that is very entertaining.



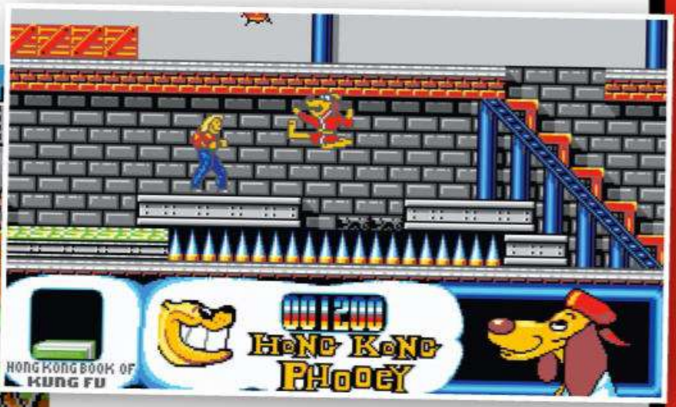
MEGA TWINS
ATARI ST, 1991
■ A colourful and tightly programmed 16-bit conversion of the Capcom arcade classic.



DARKMAN
COMMODORE 64, 1991
■ Twilight produced the 8-bit conversions of Ocean's latest licensed tie-in, based on Sam Raimi's cult movie.



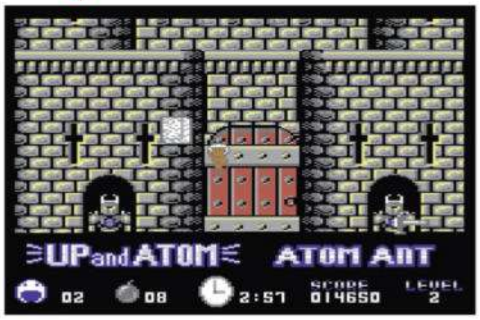
» [Amiga] Technically just before Twilight, *Pro Tennis Simulator* was its only real sports title conversion.



» [Atari] 16-bit conversions of *Hong Kong Phooey* remained a hangover from Twilight's past.

> "We planned to do arcade conversions and design our own games"
> **Andy Swann**

UP and ATOM
ATOM ANT
07 08 3:57 SCORE 013660 LEVEL 6



» [C64] *Atom Ant – Up And Atom* was influenced by *Bomb Jack* and possibly *Rampage*.

terrace house in Mayfield Grove, Harrogate where most of them were already living. "It was filthy, and we ended up with the whole downstairs floor becoming our development area," says Andy. Twilight's first batch of games included *Delta Charge* for Thalamus, which was a belated conversion of Stavros Fasoulas' classic Commodore 64 shooter *Delta*, published three years earlier. "Pete loved *Delta* on the Commodore, so we made a tech demo," recalls Andy. "I wrote *Delta* in two weeks, Andy coded the starfield, Pete did the graphics and he then managed to sell it to Thalamus," adds Jason. "He called them from a phone booth in Harrogate town centre while I passed him coins!" Twilight's version featured 20 stages and was a technically very slick monochrome sideways-scrolling affair. There was little new to see after the first half-dozen stages or so, but it was still a very competent debut title.

Just before leaving Enigma, Andy began writing freelance for Codemasters, writing 16-bit conversions of *Pro Tennis Simulator* using the pseudonym 'Mayfield'.

Twilight's next few titles trod a familiar path. *Ruff & Reddy In The Space Adventure* was based on the late-Fifties Hanna-Barbera kids TV cartoon series followed by other Hanna-Barbera games based on the cartoons *Atom Ant*, *Yogi Bear*, *Top Cat*, *Hong Kong Phooey* and *Quick Draw McGraw*, again all published by Hi-Tec. They were all simple, playable arcade games that did nothing new but were perfectly pitched for the target audience.

By Christmas 1990, Twilight was fully engaged with multiple publishers and projects, and so new recruits Dave Box, Wayne Billingham, Mark Barker, Noel Hines, James Smart, Martin Severn, Andy Severn and Rob Holman became involved in various roles and capacities. "We then set up two development teams working at once," remembers Stuart. One team continued to work on 8-bit development and the other started looking at consoles and 16-bit contracts. Twilight also moved its business into a proper office elsewhere in Harrogate. Producing 8-bit conversions of the movie licence *Darkman*, and then multi-platform versions of *WWF Wrestlemania* for Ocean Software progressed Twilight's portfolio significantly. It was finally breaking out of the mould and starting to work on products more attuned with its long-term goals. Ocean France was working on the Atari ST and Amiga versions of Toaplan's *Snow Bros* ▶

ROD-LAND
ZX SPECTRUM, 1991
■ Despite the lack of colour, this Spectrum conversion turned out to be just as playable as the original.

PUSH FIRE BUTTON TO START

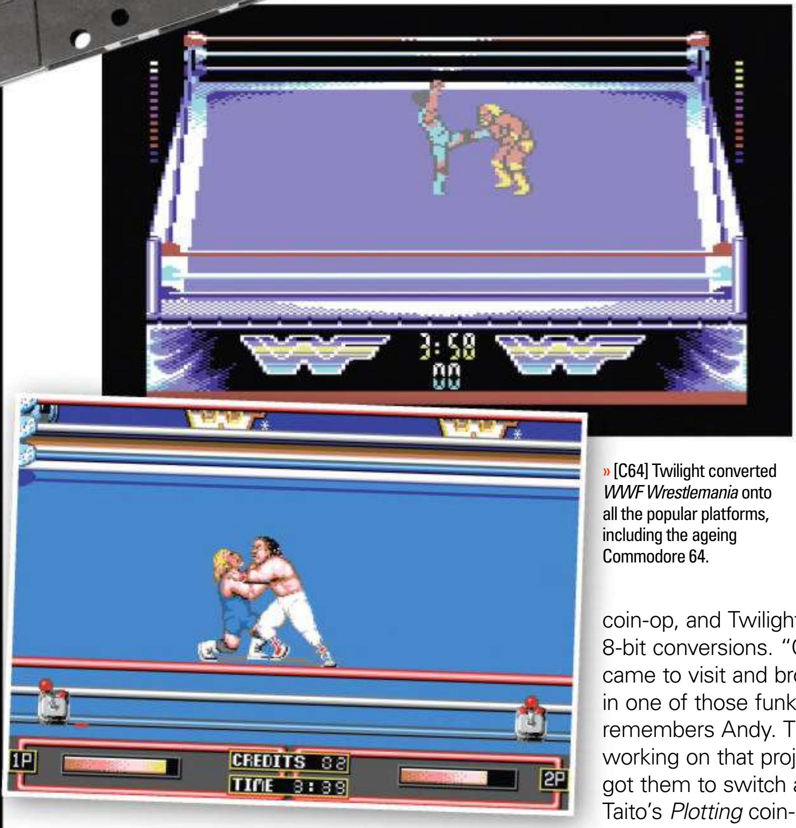
BONANZA BROTHERS
AMIGA, 1991
■ Sega's arcade game was impeccably converted to the Atari ST and Amiga by Synergy and Twilight.

WWF WRESTLEMANIA
AMIGA, 1991
■ This featured the best-known wrestlers from the WWF, before it got renamed.

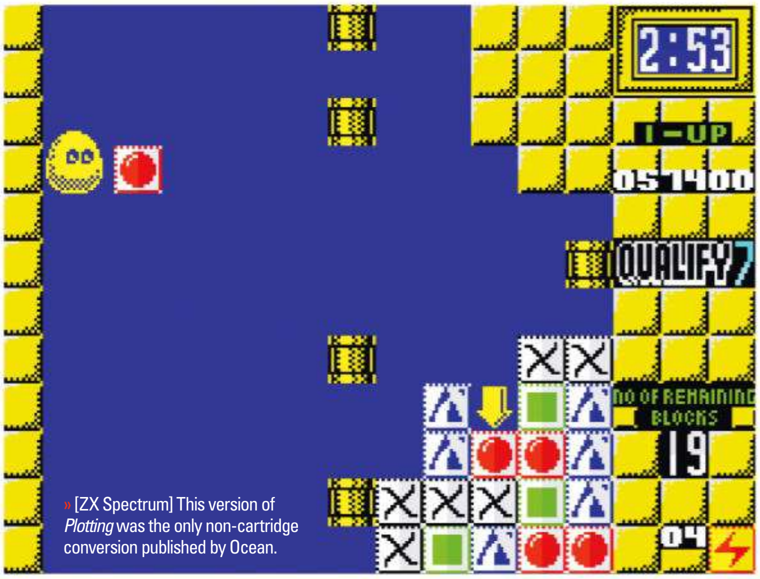
THE ADDAMS FAMILY
COMMODORE 64, 1992
■ A nicely presented and rather nimble platformer, converted from the official game of the hit movie.

VIDEO KID
ATARI ST, 1992
■ A challenging game that would have benefitted if the kid stood out better against the background.

ALFRED CHICKEN
SNES, 1994
■ Although quite derivative, Alfred had his own style and charm, and the gameplay was pecked just right. [Ouch - Ed]



» [C64] Twilight converted *WWF Wrestlemania* onto all the popular platforms, including the ageing Commodore 64.



» [ZX Spectrum] This version of *Plotting* was the only non-cartridge conversion published by Ocean.

> “We were right at the back of the queue getting WWF Wrestlemania”
> **Andy Swann**

coin-op, and Twilight was tasked to write the 8-bit conversions. “Colin Gordon from Ocean came to visit and brought us the arcade board in one of those funky steel photography cases,” remembers Andy. They hadn’t even started working on that project though when Ocean got them to switch attention to converting Taito’s *Plotting* coin-op on the same deal, and *Snow Bros* was never released. Unfortunately, Twilight’s conversion of *Plotting* for the cartridge-based Commodore 64 Games System console was never released either. The Amstrad conversion was developed as a cartridge-only release for the redesigned 464 Plus, 6128 Plus and the ill-fated GX4000.

The following year, Ocean then brought the single-biggest project to Twilight’s door, needing six different formats produced in record time, as Andy recalls. “We were right at the back of the queue getting *WWF Wrestlemania*. By the time we’d got the green light, it was already mid-April with an October release date.” Twilight’s recent influx of new developers meant that the almost impossible deadline could be met, with David Box, Finlay Munro and Martin Severn all taking up different versions, along with Jason, Andy and others all pitching in. “It was a massive rush,” adds Andy. “I’ll never forget finishing up the Amiga and ST versions with Mark Mason late at night then ringing Colin Gordon. He told us to take it to an address in Leeds on an industrial estate. We drove there at around 1am. I couldn’t believe anyone would be there to meet us, and thought we’d end up sleeping in the car waiting for the next business day. However, two lads answered the door, and let us in. The room was full of

THE DNA OF TWILIGHT

HOW TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL STUDIO

ENERGY
TIME
SCORE
GANG
47:29
000100

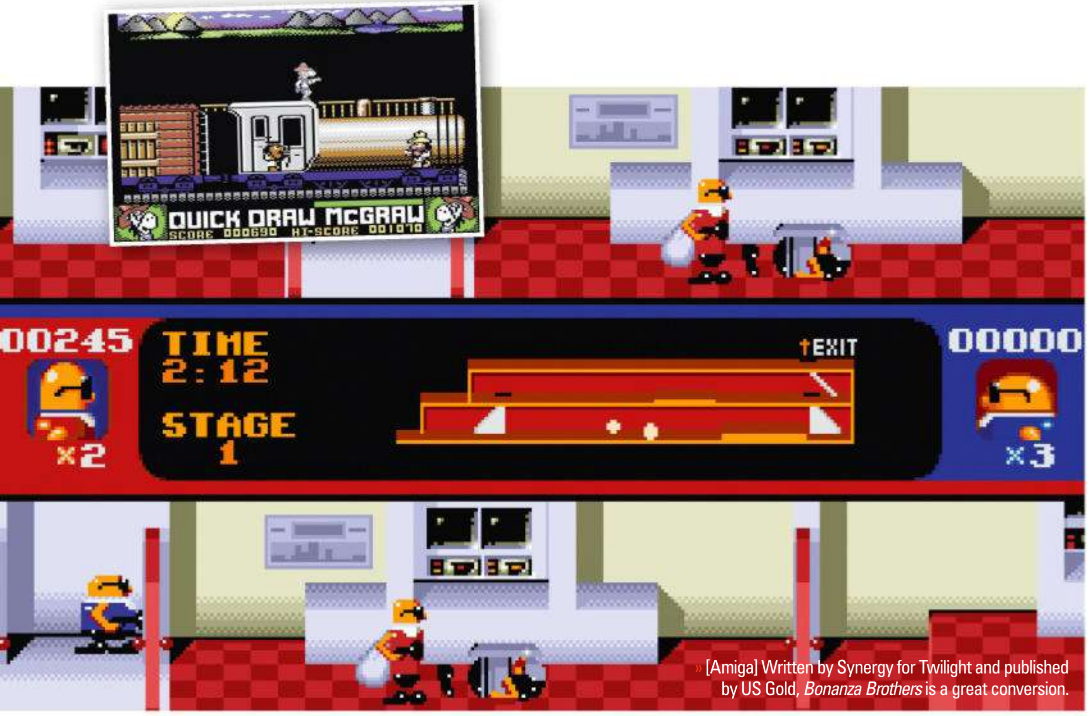
KIDS’ TV LICENCES

Although the founding members of Twilight were keen to get away from kids’ cartoon series licences, it was a handy place to start, allowing Twilight to produce a good half-a-dozen or so games across multiple platforms in quick succession, whilst preparing to move onto different 16-bit and console development in the future. Atom Ant, Yogi Bear and Top Cat all starred in their own games.

TIME-6:00
RCH
SCORE 008100
MAGI
Bound
Press Fire to Start!
Cred:3

COIN-OP CONVERSIONS

With 16-bit computers capable of producing half-decent arcade coin-op conversions and plenty of publishers buying coin-op licences by the dozen, Twilight knew it could find work as a conversion house. In the end, it produced conversions of coin-ops from Capcom, Sega, and Taito for the Atari ST and Amiga platforms, proving its development mettle with various publishers.



» [Amiga] Written by Synergy for Twilight and published by US Gold, *Bonanza Brothers* is a great conversion.

disks and disk-copying equipment, and quite a few Amigas and STs were set up playing the big games that would be coming out that Christmas. When we left, I said to Mark, 'I don't feel right leaving Ocean's big Christmas game in a room with two teenage lads and all that copying equipment,' but he just said, 'We've done our job Andy, let's go home.'"

Andy and Mark needn't have worried. *WWF Wrestlemania* was released on schedule, and performed exceptionally well, thanks to WWF being a huge part of Sky TV's promotional push to gain subscribers back in the early Nineties.

Thanks to former Enigma Variations colleague David Bland who now worked for Tiertex, Twilight was subcontracted to produce Atari ST and Amiga conversions of the Sega coin-op *Bonanza Brothers* and Capcom's *Mega Twins* coin-op for publisher US Gold. Andy Severn took on the *Bonanza Brothers* programming duties, and Andy Swann tackled *Mega Twins*, with Mark Mason coding the front-end in a role reversal for what Andy and Mark had done on *WWF Wrestlemania*.

The Sales Curve's publishing label Storm needed a ZX Spectrum conversion of *Rod-Land*, and Jason stepped in and produced a terrific conversion of the Jaleco coin-op, albeit in monochrome. Within the space of just over a year, Twilight had successfully stepped away from the quickly produced budget licences and made the transition to a reliable conversion house across multiple formats, although there was one film licence title that didn't turn out as intended. "*Cool World* was painful," explains Andy. "It was meant to be a point-and-click

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

WHAT THE KEY TWILIGHT STAFF DID NEXT

STUART COOK

Stuart went on to work for a few publishers like THQ and Codemasters, creating console titles like *Jay The Lion*, *Micro Maniacs* and *The Land Before Time* and co-writing *Prost Grand Prix* for Canal Plus. He then moved into software development for retail, before eventually turning to writing Apple and iOS apps, which he continues to do today.

JASON MCGANN

After Twilight, Jason cofounded Hookstone with Peter Tattersall, making a Japanese version of *Alfred Chicken* and creating *Zoop* for Viacom which was ported onto every available machine, followed by *Sentinel Returns* with Geoff Crammond, featuring music by John Carpenter. Jason then cofounded Mobius Entertainment which became Rockstar Leeds in 2004. He continues to work in the games industry.

ANDY SWANN

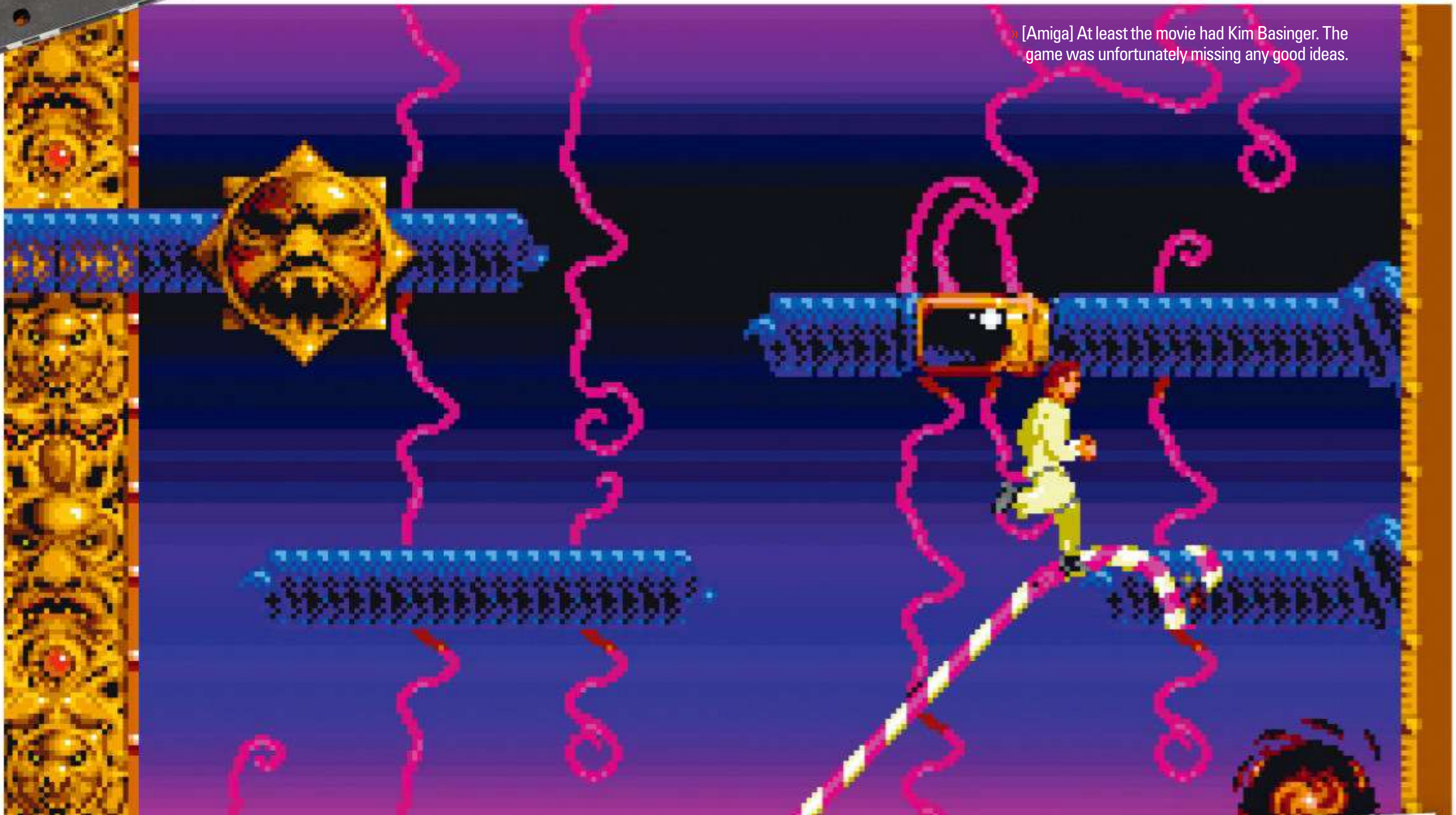
Andy went on to work for Electronic Sound And Pictures, then for Team17 on non-*Worms* titles that were never released, before settling at Sony Europe, where he has worked on the PlayStation 2 titles *Dropship: United Peace Force*, *Hardware: Online Arena* and the PS4 follow-up *Hardware: Rivals*. Andy is now actively in research and development at Sony, working on various top-secret projects.

OCEAN SOFTWARE STALWARTS

■ Twilight's association with Ocean Software proved particularly fruitful, with a number of coin-op conversions and film licences coming its way. *The Addams Family*, *Cool World*, *Darkman*, *The Flintstones*, *Plotting* and *WWF Wrestlemania* were all produced in the early to mid-Nineties for Ocean, with a brand-new original 16-bit 3D game engine being written for Ocean kiboshed shortly before Twilight's demise.

NINTENDO CONVERTS

■ Mostly thanks to an easy development transition from the ZX Spectrum to the Game Boy due to the Z80 processor, Twilight moved on to Nintendo development with titles like *Alfred Chicken*, *The Flintstones* and *Yogi Bear's Gold Rush*, with its entry into the handheld console market initially achieved via a less-than-official development kit. *Alfred Chicken* proved to be Twilight's one and only SNES release.



[Amiga] At least the movie had Kim Basinger. The game was unfortunately missing any good ideas.

I DON'T LIKE YOUR MONEY HARRIS, BUT YOU'VE GOT ENOUGH OF IT!! STEP INSIDE. SUCKER!!

92
SCORE:00035650
LIVES:06

> "Cool World was painful. It was meant to be a point-and-click adventure, but Ocean didn't want that"
> **Andy Swann**

adventure, but Ocean didn't want that. From then on we were winging it and made so many bad design decisions."

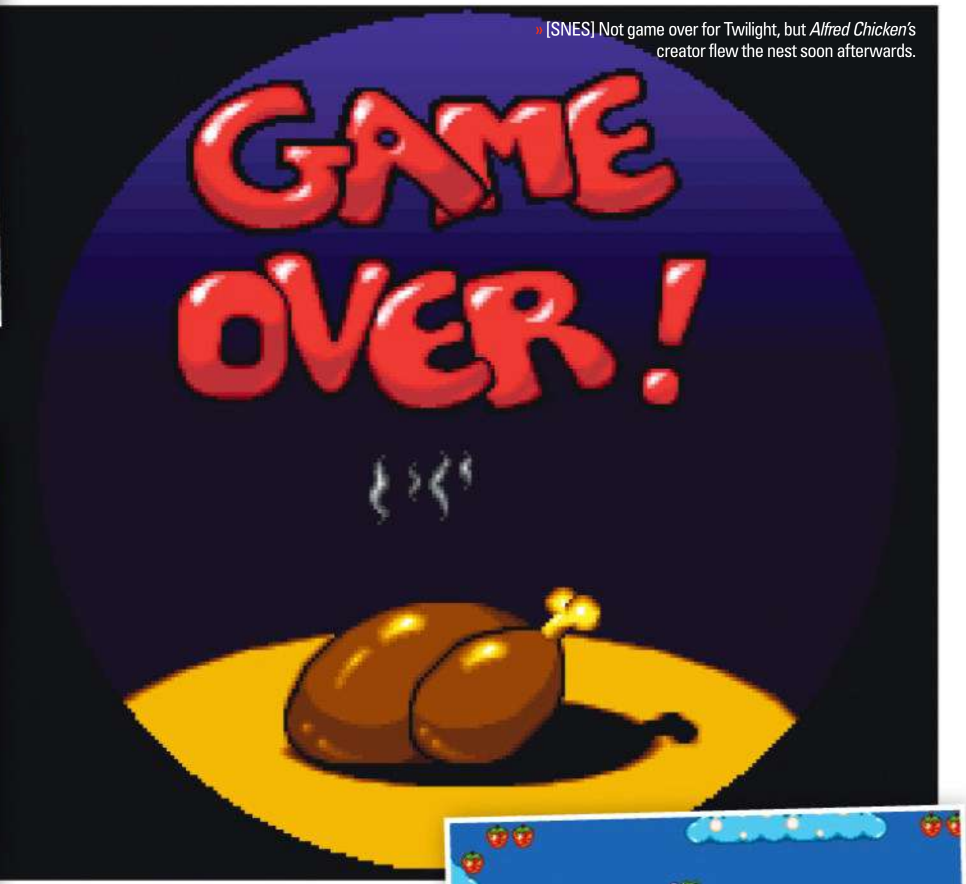
Having completed a series of TV, film and coin-op-licensed products, the next phase was to begin working on games of its own design. Step forward *Video Kid* for the Atari ST and Amiga, released by Gremlin in 1992 and the brainchild of Stuart and Pete. A continuously scrolling shooter with five worlds to conquer, the game received mixed reviews from the magazines, and was competing with a crop of similar titles. However, buoyed by its first 'Original Twilight Production' release, the team was keen to produce another, this time featuring a chicken.

"*Alfred Chicken* was Jason's idea. He came in with it one day on a large drawing pad," remembers Andy. Jason began writing *Alfred Chicken* for the Nintendo Game Boy, and it wasn't long before Ocean took the project on. However, there was a quick change of heart from the publisher, who wanted to make a significant alteration, as Andy explains. "We were probably halfway through making *Alfred Chicken* on Ocean's coin, when Colin showed up and said, 'Nobody's interested in a game about a chicken. Here's Woody Woodpecker, change it to that.' We had to really think about what to do, and in the end we stuck to our guns, paid Ocean back and looked for another publisher."

Industry agent John Cook steered Twilight towards Mindscape International in Burgess Hill, near Brighton. Mindscape signed *Alfred Chicken* for the Amiga, CD32, Nintendo Game Boy, NES and SNES, and gave Jason and Twilight a free hand to develop the game as they saw fit.

Twilight's newest publisher bent over backwards to ensure maximum publicity for the game, with Mindscape's Karl Fitzhugh creating The Alfred Chicken Party ("PROTECT YOUR CHICKEN VIDEO-GAME RIGHTS!"), standing in the 1993 Christchurch by-election. Karl donned a huge red and yellow Chicken outfit, and gained 18 votes, missing the wooden spoon by just two votes, narrowly edging ahead of the Rainbow Alliance Party. The sight of a

» Let's talk about the elephant in the room, or failing that maybe the giant chicken?

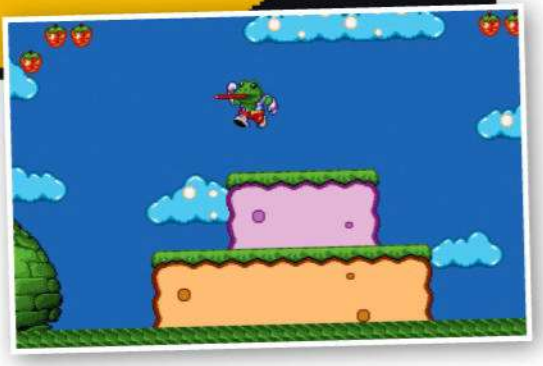


» [SNES] Not game over for Twilight, but *Alfred Chicken's* creator flew the nest soon afterwards.

giant chicken standing on the stage awaiting the results was transmitted live on BBC 1 and ITV in the early hours of Friday 30 July 1993.

Five years later, proposals were made to increase the number of signatures required for nomination in an election to reduce the number of frivolous candidates, with 'The Alfred Chicken Party' being cited in a Select Committee on Home Affairs paper in 1998. But, as the saying goes, no publicity was bad publicity. Stuart produced a version of *Alfred Chicken* for the Mega Drive, but it was never published.

> "It was my first stab at running a 'real' company, so I made all the classic mistakes quite early in my career"
> **Jason McGann**



» [Mega Drive] *Frog Dude* went unfinished on Sega's console, and so remained a technical demo.

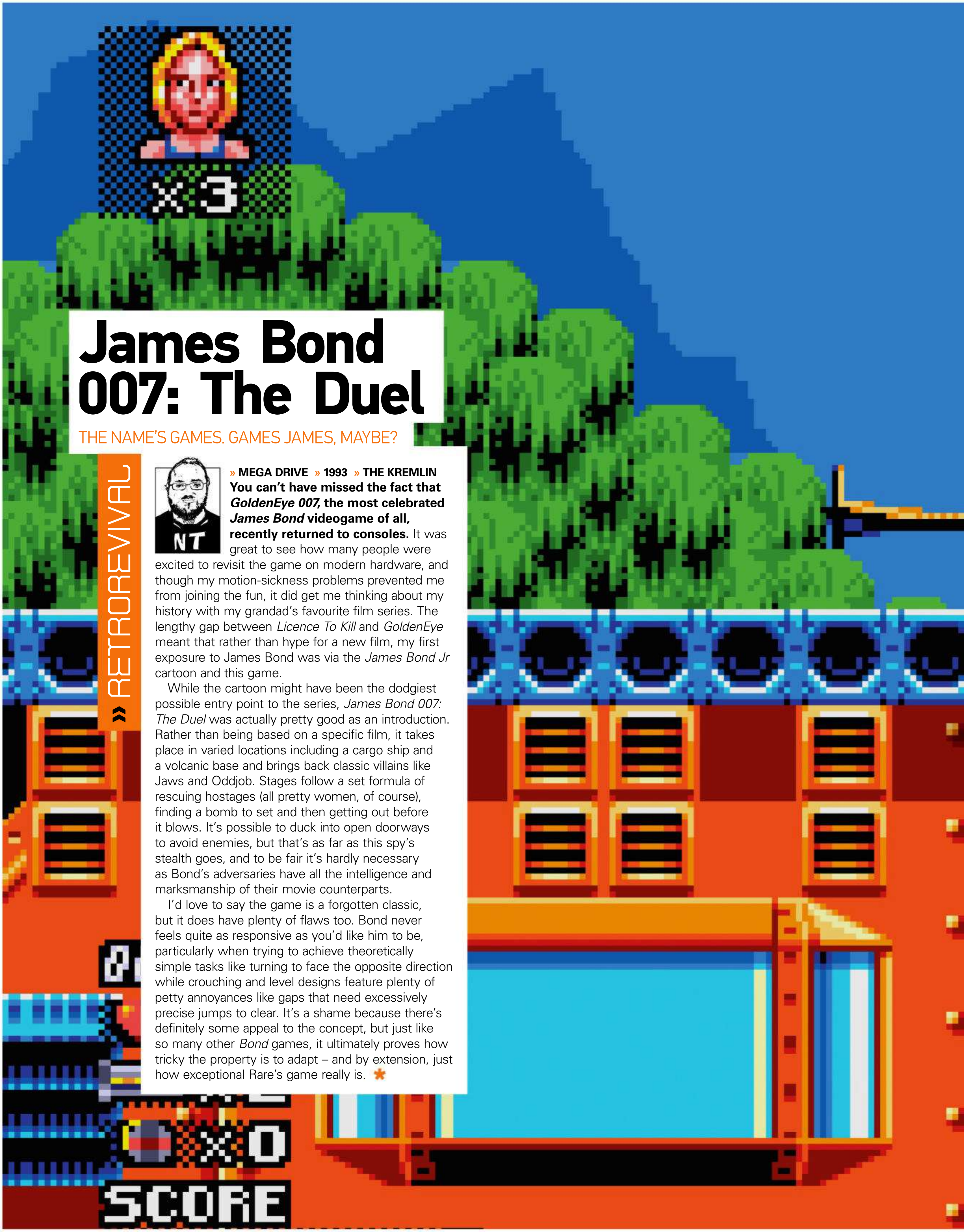
Another Twilight Mega Drive game that failed to appear was called *Frog Dude*. "A game would take about eight or nine months to make, and as soon as it was done for Christmas, we'd have downtime until the next project arrived in March," says Andy. "*Frog Dude* was a tech demo written during that downtime, showing we could do Mega Drive games too." A collaboration between Andy and graphic artist Pete, *Frog Dude* proved Twilight had the technical ability on the Mega Drive, but it never progressed beyond the demo stage.

Soon after *Alfred Chicken* was finished on the SNES, Pete and Jason left to set up Hookstone. Andy Swann left around the same time, and whilst the team continued for a few more years, Twilight didn't get much else new published besides *Yogi Bear's Gold Rush* on the Game Boy for Empire, though not for the lack of trying. "We got a contract from Ocean to produce a 3D fantasy game, but six months in the programmer ended up in jail. It screwed up our relationship with Ocean as they had spent money on the development of a 3D engine that we couldn't finish," says Stuart.

A *Fantasy Quest*-style game with Telstar was also lined up, but the publisher pulled out of the industry before it could be completed. With the industry transitioning to 3D capable consoles, Twilight struggled. "Mark and I kept going, but we couldn't get new work quickly enough, so eventually we paid staff what they were owed then let them go. We shut everything down and moved on," adds Stuart. "It ended mostly due to stress and young folk starting to move in different directions. It was a bit of an angry split, but we have since all made up, realising the cause was just time and different ambitions." Twilight had lasted seven years.

"It was my first stab at running a 'real' company, so I made all the classic mistakes quite early in my career," admits Jason. "Ultimately I learned a ton about working with people and processes but for me it's the human aspects, especially after Mark [Mason] passed away so young. He was quite a character and I often think about him. In fact, all the people I worked with at Twilight made an indelible mark on my heart. Things were simpler, less noisy and I made some real friends."

Andy gets the last word, concluding, "We were just kids really, but we did pretty well making some high-profile games. I just wish I'd focussed more on gameplay over technicalities, but I didn't really figure that out until long after I'd left Twilight." *



James Bond 007: The Duel

THE NAME'S GAMES. GAMES JAMES, MAYBE?

NT

» MEGA DRIVE » 1993 » THE KREMLIN

You can't have missed the fact that *GoldenEye 007*, the most celebrated *James Bond* videogame of all, recently returned to consoles. It was great to see how many people were excited to revisit the game on modern hardware, and though my motion-sickness problems prevented me from joining the fun, it did get me thinking about my history with my grandad's favourite film series. The lengthy gap between *Licence To Kill* and *GoldenEye* meant that rather than hype for a new film, my first exposure to James Bond was via the *James Bond Jr* cartoon and this game.

While the cartoon might have been the dodgiest possible entry point to the series, *James Bond 007: The Duel* was actually pretty good as an introduction. Rather than being based on a specific film, it takes place in varied locations including a cargo ship and a volcanic base and brings back classic villains like Jaws and Oddjob. Stages follow a set formula of rescuing hostages (all pretty women, of course), finding a bomb to set and then getting out before it blows. It's possible to duck into open doorways to avoid enemies, but that's as far as this spy's stealth goes, and to be fair it's hardly necessary as Bond's adversaries have all the intelligence and marksmanship of their movie counterparts.

I'd love to say the game is a forgotten classic, but it does have plenty of flaws too. Bond never feels quite as responsive as you'd like him to be, particularly when trying to achieve theoretically simple tasks like turning to face the opposite direction while crouching and level designs feature plenty of petty annoyances like gaps that need excessively precise jumps to clear. It's a shame because there's definitely some appeal to the concept, but just like so many other *Bond* games, it ultimately proves how tricky the property is to adapt – and by extension, just how exceptional Rare's game really is. *

SYSTEM 24 HEAVEN

SEGA'S SYSTEM 24 ARCADE HARDWARE HAS BEEN CALLED 'OBSCURE' BY SOME, AND THE GAMES THAT RAN ON IT CONSIDERED 'CURIOSITIES'. AT RETRO GAMER WE FEEL THERE HAS BEEN SOME KIND OF MISUNDERSTANDING. JOIN US AS WE UNCOVER THE REALITY

WORDS BY MARTYN CARROLL

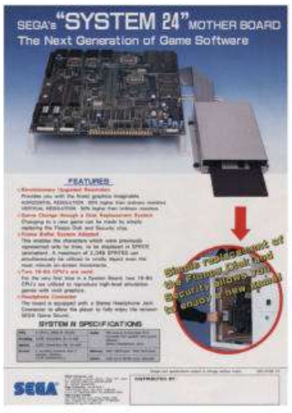
SCRAMBLE SPIRITS

GAIN GROUND

When you think back to Sega's arcade heyday in the Eighties, games like *Space Harrier, Out Run* and *After Burner* spring to mind first. It was these show-stopping Super-Scaler titles, in their deluxe sit-down forms, that drew crowds and defined Sega as perhaps the most exciting arcade developer of the era.

Yet the arcade industry was a battleground back then, with manufacturers fiercely competing for floor space. Sega couldn't rely on one or two high-profile titles per year to keep itself at the forefront of the scene, so it utilised different arcade hardware to produce a steady stream of releases that provided operators with the widest possible choice in terms of cost and game type. Take 1988 as an example. In the year that Sega released *Galaxy Force* and *Power Drift*, two stunning titles running on its then flagship Y Board hardware, it put out another 14 arcade games. Among these were several System 16 titles such as *Altered Beast*, *Dynamite Dux* and *Passing Shot*, plus games on three other formats, including an arcade version of *Tetris* that ran on what was essentially Master System hardware.

1988 also saw the launch of System 24, Sega's new format that would further extend its output by offering games running at higher resolutions. At the time, all of its existing hardware was designed for low-resolution 15KHz monitors, whereas System 24 supported medium-resolution 24KHz monitors. This resulted in a more-detailed, higher-density display thanks to a 65% increase in horizontal resolution and a 50% increase in vertical resolution compared to an ordinary low-res monitor. The system also marked another first for Sega – the game data was stored on a floppy disk which was read using a standard 3.5-inch disk drive connected to the main arcade board. The idea here was to reduce costs for operators. Not only did the disk reduce the number of chips required on the board, but once takings for a game started to tail off, a new game disk and accompanying EPROMs could be purchased and slotted straight in. So operators could buy in the hardware and 24KHz monitor for £2,795 and then benefit from a low-maintenance system that could be regularly refreshed with top new Sega games costing around £400 each – typically half the cost of a new game PCB at the time.


SEGA's "SYSTEM 24" MOTHER BOARD
The Next Generation of Game Software

FEATURES

SYSTEM 24 SPECIFICATIONS

SEGA

» "The next generation of game software." This flyer highlights the hardware features, focussing on the ability to change games by swapping disks.

For gamers, the benefits were more subtle. We have to remember that medium-res games were not new – Atari's *Paperboy*, *Super Sprint* and *APB* were all waving from the other side of the arcade. What Sega did was stick some very capable graphics hardware behind the display to make these 'HD' games pop. Four separate tilemap layers were employed to handle scrolling (both full-screen and windowed), and the double-buffered display could show 4,352 colours on-screen from a total palette of 32,768 (and you could triple

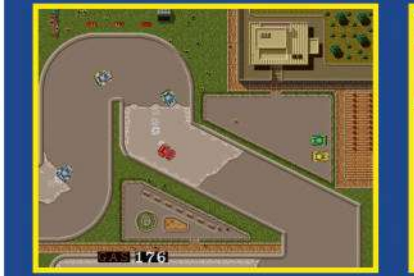
SUPER MASTERS

ROUGH RACER

BONANZA BROS.

THE GREAT EIGHT

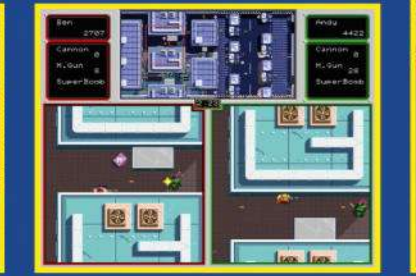
THE MAIN GAMES THAT MAKE UP
THE SYSTEM 24 CATALOGUE



HOT-ROD

1988

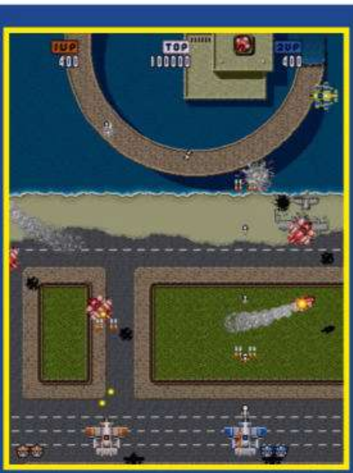
■ Talk about an inauspicious debut to show off the new System 24 hardware. It plays fine, and is quite fun in multiplayer, but it's just such an ordinary racer in almost every regard. *Commodore User* called it "dull and frustrating" and it's hard to argue with that.



CRACK DOWN

1989

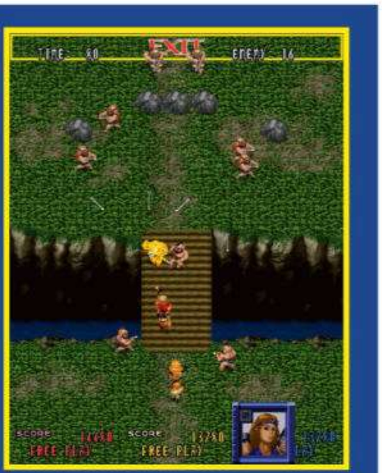
■ We're fully on board with any game where the two heroes are named Ben Breaker and Andy Attacker. Seriously though, this is a very smart spin on maze shooters, but it *needs* to be played in co-op, otherwise a third of the screen is blanked out and the gameplay suffers.



SCRAMBLE SPIRITS

1988

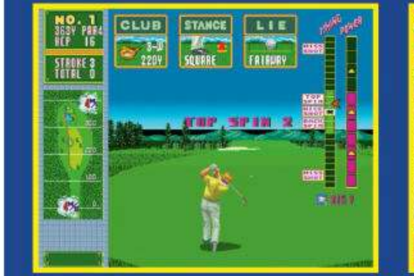
■ A standard vertical shooter that delivers dependable action for two players. But it's the exemplary sprite work and detailed backgrounds that elevate it above the competition. One moan: the boss battles are boring – how many different hulks of metal can you blow up?



GAIN GROUND

1988

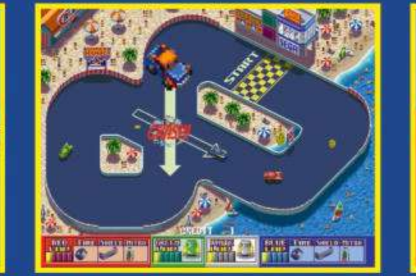
■ Here we have the closest thing to a cult game on the System 24. It may lack instant appeal and the visuals are rather muted, but *Gain Ground* delivers the perfect mix of action and strategy. It was designed for three players and that's how it should be experienced.



SUPER MASTERS

1989

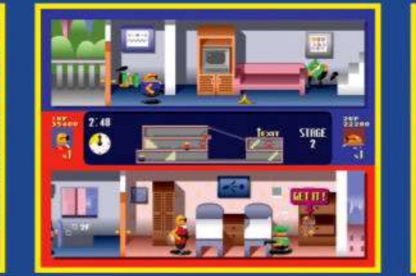
■ Featuring a neat control mechanic where you flick a small metal bar to make your shot, this is arcade golf with a surprising amount of depth. It looks gorgeous too. *Sinclair User* called it "possibly the best golf sim ever" at the time of release and we'd go along with that.



ROUGH RACER

1990

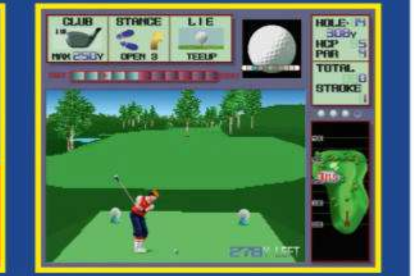
■ Rough by name… OK so it's not that bad, but like *Hot-Rod*, it's hard to get excited about another top-down racing game. On the plus side, some of the later tracks spring surprises (like massive fans that blow your car around), and the trackside pixel work is excellent.



BONANZA BROS

1990

■ Ah, it's our second-favourite videogame 'bros' after Mario and Luigi. This is the jewel in the System 24 crown, featuring winning co-op gameplay and a trademark look. It's no surprise this was converted to more home formats (ten!) than any other System 24 game.



DYNAMIC CC

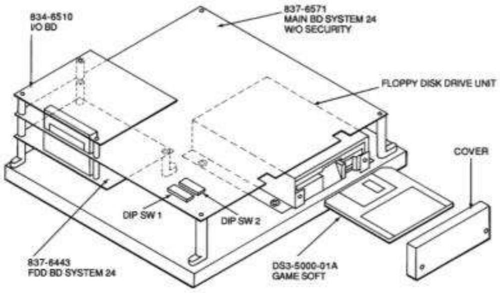
1991

■ Designed primarily as an upgrade for *Super Masters* and it supersedes it in almost every way, being brainier, more realistic and extra challenging. But it's not as immediate and lacks some of the fun. Plus, we miss those impossibly green greens from the earlier game.

> "ALL OF SEGA'S EXISTING HARDWARE WAS DESIGNED FOR LOW-RESOLUTION 15KHZ MONITORS, WHEREAS SYSTEM 24 SUPPORTED MEDIUM-RESOLUTION 24KHZ MONITORS"

those numbers if you figured in shadows and highlights). Furthermore it could generate up to 2,048 sprites on-screen simultaneously – a ridiculous number. It was all designed with 2D games in mind, so while the sprites could be zoomed to scale them up or down at pre-set sizes, it lacked Super-Scaler capabilities. The system was powered by two 68000 processors running at 10MHz (although one was used merely for booting), and the available memory was 1,360KB. Like Sega's other systems of the era, sound was provided by an eight-channel Yamaha YM2151 and it was paired with a simple stereo DAC (Digital-to-Analogue Converter) for speech and sound effects.

The name 'System 24' was chosen because of the 24KHz monitor, but it also served to position the hardware within Sega's arcade line. It was an advancement over the stalwart System 16 hardware, but it was not a



» Sega's hardware diagram shows how the floppy drive sits beneath the game board inside protective metal housing. Some games also feature an additional input/output board which handles analogue controls.

ASH ROUTLEDGE

Q&A

ASH OF ASH 'N' DAVE FAME REVEALS HOW THE PAIR CONVERTED HOT-ROD TO THE C64

» Ash developed more than 20 C64 games with his coding partner Dave Saunders.

DID YOU PLAY HOT-ROD BEFORE YOU WORKED ON THE CONVERSION?

Yes, we grew up in Eastbourne and there was a four-player *Hot-Rod* in the Eastbourne Pier arcade a few years before we made the game. For the conversion they sent us the three-player machine which was about twice the width of a normal arcade cab. We had an office above Dave's dad's antique shop and luckily he helped us out by clearing a space at the back of the shop. It would have been impossible to get it up the stairs as we were three floors up! So we would be in the back of the shop playing the game and taking notes. Friends used to come round to play the game with us. It was a lot of fun.

HOW CHALLENGING WAS IT TO REPLICATE THE FULL-SCREEN SCROLLING ON THE C64?

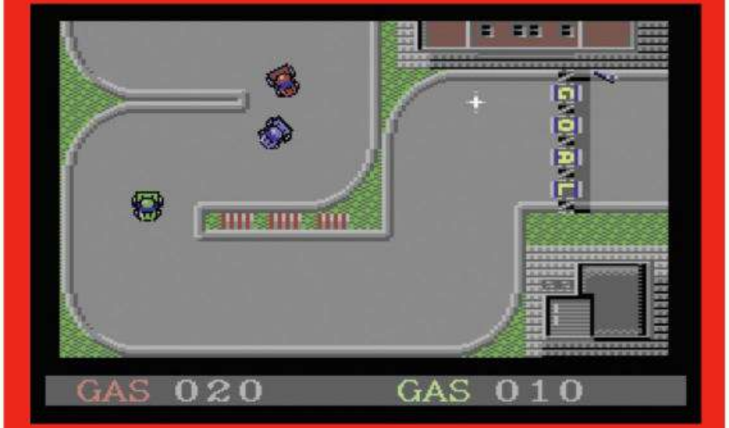
It was difficult because of the amount of data that had to be moved. Remember the C64 only had a 1MHz processor and we were always aiming for 60fps. *Hot-Rod* was a little slower moving than some racing games and we took advantage of this by getting the characters – 8x8 squares of background graphics – ready on whichever two edges required new scenery, over a number of game frames, so there was a maximum speed the screen could move. The upside was that the scroll routine ran very quickly, allowing for a good amount of processing to be left for the rest of the game to run.

HOW DID YOU HANDLE THE SPRITES?

To make the cars look fairly high resolution for the C64 we used a regular sprite for the colour and overlaid a monochrome sprite for the black outline. We dropped the number of cars from four to three to enable this, so we used six of the eight sprites for the cars. This left two sprites for birds and other animated objects, including the dust effect when skidding.

HOW HAPPY WERE YOU WITH THE FINISHED GAME? ZZAP!64 RATED YOUR VERSION MORE HIGHLY THAN THE AMIGA VERSION...

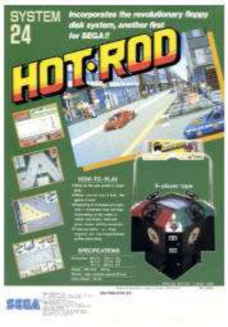
We were very happy with the game and the reviews. Even though an Amiga version was made, the development was entirely separate and done by a different company. Our C64 version was written from scratch with all original artwork, using the arcade machine as a reference. This was always the best way to make a game back then, as porting inevitably led to a less-optimised game that would run badly. Dave and I only worked on original games that we could write from scratch for the best results.



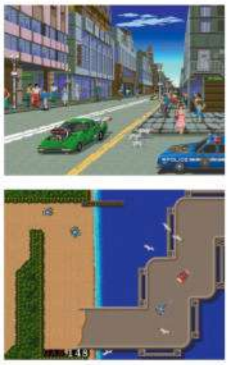
» [C64] Although three cars are featured, one is always controlled by the computer.

"GAIN GROUND WAS SMARTER THAN YOUR AVERAGE ARCADE GAME, BUT IT LACKED INSTANT APPEAL..."

generational leap. That task was reserved for System 32, which would debut in 1991 with the release of *Rad Mobile*. Hardware aside, perhaps the system's most interesting innovation for gamers was the floppy disk feature. You wouldn't know the game data was stored on a floppy, as the drive was tucked away beneath the game board inside a protective metal case. You'd only tell if you witnessed the hardware powering up and saw the brief 'loading' screen. Once booted it operated like any other coin-op, except maybe, the games themselves were a little *different*. That was the hope anyway, as anticipated by *Sinclair User* magazine when it reported on the hardware in 1989, "You might know that Sega has recently introduced a game system called System 24. This is a board packed full of chips, but the most important thing is that the actual game code is loaded from disk. It allows Sega to be a little more adventurous with the style of game it produces on this system, as if a particular game bombs out, it won't be left with half a ton of useless hardware on its hands, only a few disks."

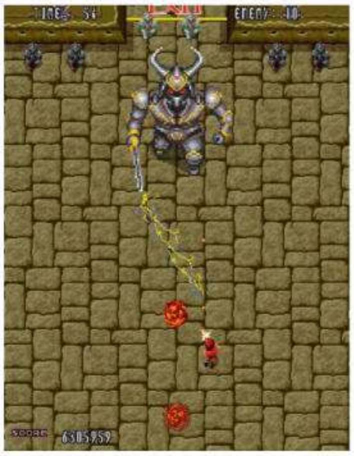

SYSTEM 24
Incorporates the revolutionary floppy disk system, another first for SEGA!!
HOT ROD
SEGA

» The top-spec *Hot-Rod* was the 'console' type with its four steering wheels, 26-inch upward-facing monitor and two-metre-high marquee.

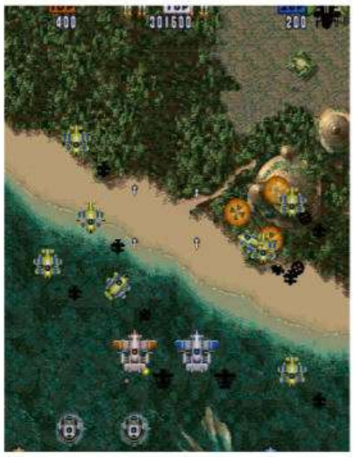


» [Arcade] The higher-resolution graphics allowed Sega to add some detailed scenes, like this opening sequence to *Hot-Rod*.

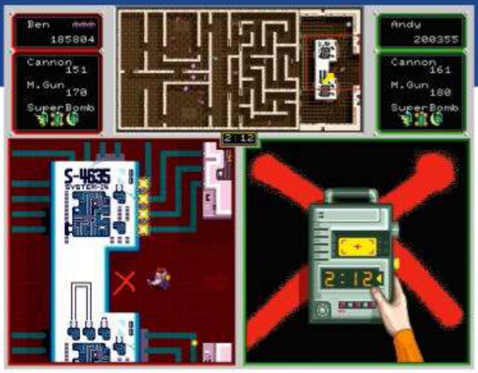
It was sound logic, yet the first System 24 game was almost the antithesis of 'adventurous'. Debuting in Japan in March 1988, *Hot-Rod* was a top-down racing game in the stye of *Super Sprint*. It seemed that Sega had simply looked at what worked well on Atari's medium-res System 2 hardware and decided to replicate it. The key difference over *Super Sprint* was that the screen scrolled in four directions, making good use of the hardware's tilemaps, but it was still a fairly tepid racer. Sega recognised this as the game speed was doubled for the overseas release (dubbed the 'turbo' version). *Hot-Rod* was available as a stand-up cab for either two or three players, or as a lavish four-player version where the 26-inch monitor was sunk into a large table-style console and the four



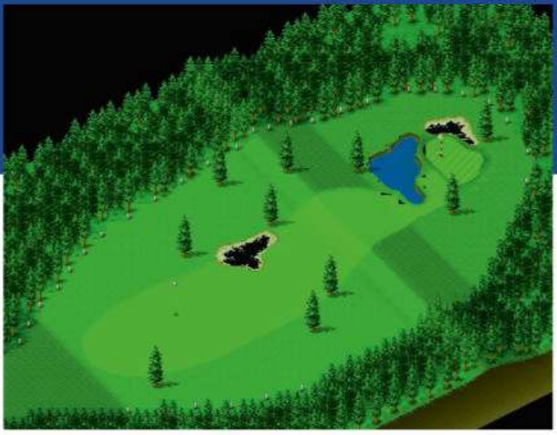
» [Arcade] In *Gain Ground*, strategic thinking occasionally takes a back seat to boss battling.



» [Arcade] As the action is so intense, it's easy to overlook the beautiful backdrops in *Scramble Spirits*.



» [Arcade] The System 24 makes a cameo appearance in *Crack Down* as a spark-spitting supercomputer.



» [Arcade] Golf game *Super Masters* uses lovely isometric graphics to show the flight of the ball.

> "THE GAME DATA WAS STORED ON A FLOPPY DISK WHICH WAS READ USING A STANDARD 3.5-INCH DISK DRIVE CONNECTED TO THE MAIN ARCADE BOARD"

steering wheels were positioned around it. This four-player behemoth was clearly a custom cab, which jarred with the idea that operators could easily swap out the game for a new one.

The next release was *Scramble Spirits*, a vertical shooter which arrived in October 1988. The game was similar to Sega's *Sonic Boom*, released the previous year and running on System 16 hardware, only it supported two players and the playing area was much larger (there was no need for the viewpoint to scroll slightly left and right, as you'd see in most low-res vertical shooters). Unlike *Hot-Rod*, the game made good use of the hardware's sprite capabilities, filling the screen with enemies, bullets and general mayhem. Zooming effects were evident too, most noticeably in the raid on the enemy aircraft carrier in the opening stage. In the West *Scramble Spirits* was made available in a two-player upright cab adorned with game art, while in Japan the game debuted alongside Sega's new Aero City cab. This uniform white 'candy cab' was designed with System 24 in mind and featured a 26-inch medium-res monitor that could be manually rotated between horizontal and vertical positions, depending on the game installed. The Aero City would prove to be the ideal home for System 24 – in Japan at least.

Arriving a month after *Scramble Spirits* was the first System 24 game that broke from convention and took genuine risks. *Gain Ground* was a top-down combat game where up to three players battled enemy forces over four time periods. In a 2003 interview published by Sega, the game's programmer Yoshiki Ooka revealed that his bosses had specifically requested a *Gauntlet* clone for the American market, but over time it evolved into something else – a fixed-screen shooter where tactics and teamwork were required to overcome the surprisingly competent enemy AI. *Gain Ground* was smarter than your average arcade game, but by Ooka's own admission, it lacked instant appeal as the concept didn't really click for players until they had completed a dozen or so rounds. The game was designed with three players in mind and this preferred version was released overseas as an upgrade kit (specifically for the three-player *Hot-Rod* cab). ▶

MARK POTENTE

Q&A

MARK RECALLS CREATING THE GRAPHICS FOR THE 16-BIT VERSIONS OF SCRAMBLE SPIRITS.

» Mark has been creating videogame art since 1988. He currently works at Sumo Digital.

WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE ON THE SCRAMBLE SPIRITS CONVERSION?

There were a few artists covering all the formats – myself, Mark Edwards and David College. I concentrated on the backdrops on the Atari ST and Amiga versions, which were pretty simple back then.

DID YOU RECEIVE ANY ASSISTANCE FROM SEGA?

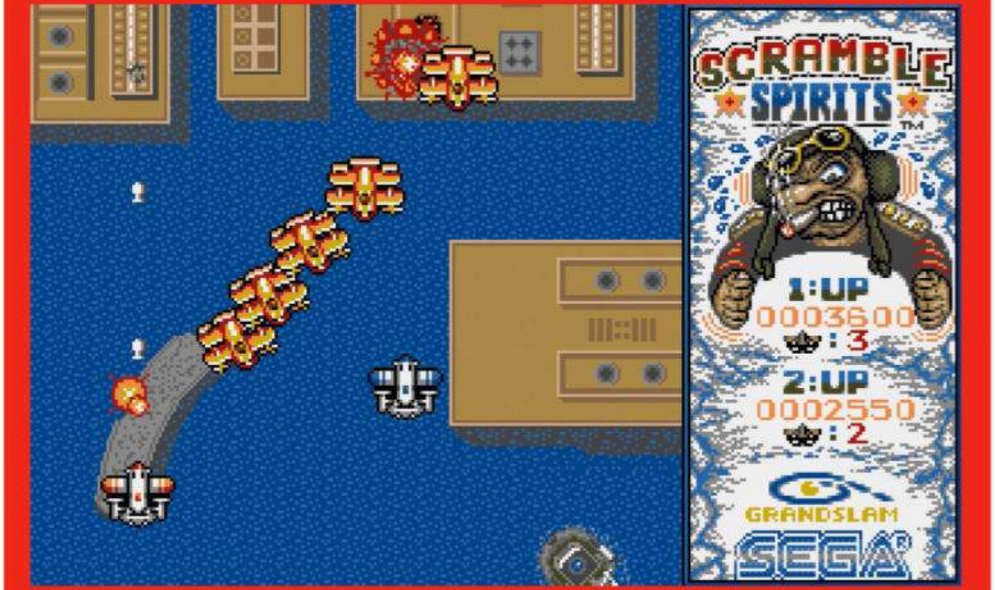
We did get a full-size arcade cabinet which lived in the corridor at Teque. The coders actually tried to extract assets from it, but I'm not sure how much information was actually gathered. We made regular trips to the cabinet to play through the levels and check the environments, to make sure we had them spot on. We probably played it more than we should have, which was eventually noticed by the boss, Tony Kavanagh. Our excuse was we needed to play it to look at the later levels! I enjoyed the game. It played really well as a co-op shoot-'em-up.

WHAT WERE THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE AT THAT TIME?

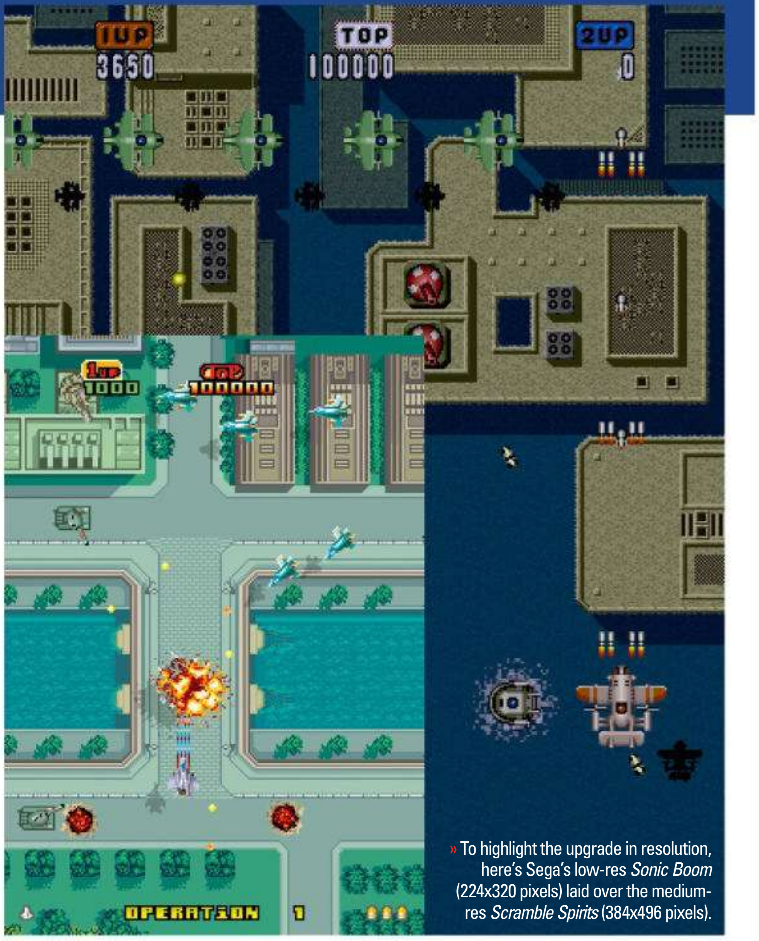
The art packages we used were OCP Art Studio and Deluxe Paint, depending on what was needed, using the former for sprites and the latter for environments.

DID YOU ENJOY THE CHALLENGE OF COIN-OP CONVERSIONS, OR DID YOU PREFER TO BE WORKING ON ORIGINAL TITLES?

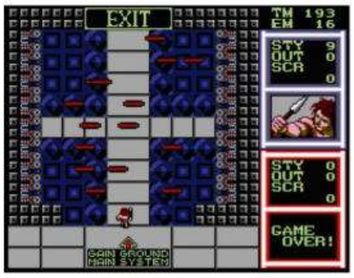
A lot of the games at Teque/Krisalis were arcade conversions. We seemed to be good at them and were asked to convert more. Whilst I enjoyed working on original titles when they came along, at least with conversions you had a base to work from and the aim was always to get as close as possible to the original given the limitations of the hardware.



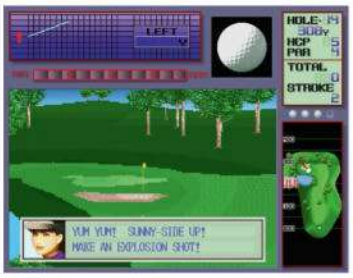
» [Amiga] The home-computer conversions were developed by Teque and published by Grandslam.


1UP
3650
TOP
100000
2UP
0
1UP
1000
TOP
100000
OPERATION
1

» To highlight the upgrade in resolution, here's Sega's low-res *Sonic Boom* (224x320 pixels) laid over the medium-res *Scramble Spirits* (384x496 pixels).

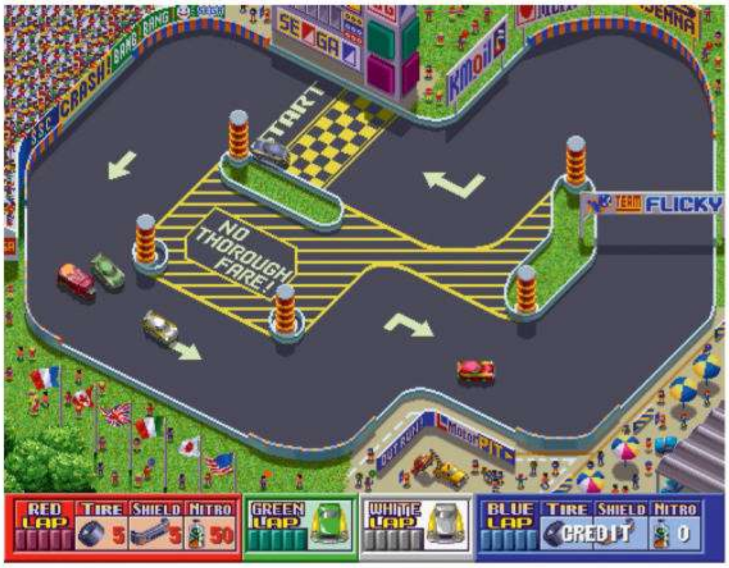

EXIT
TM 193
EM 16
STY 9
OUT 0
SCR 0
STY 0
OUT 0
SCR 0
GAME OVER!
GAIN GROUND MAIN SYSTEM

» [Master System] *Gain Ground* on the SMS features its own unique epoch, The Final Era.


LEFT
HOLE- 15
HCP
PAR
TOTAL
STROKE

YUM YUM! SUNNY-SIDE UP!
MAKE AN EXPLOSION SHOT!

» [Arcade] We feel like something got lost in translation in the US version of *Dynamic CC*.


CRASH!
BANG
BANG
SEGA
START
NO THOROUGHFARE!
FLICKY
RED LAP
TIRE
SHIELD
NITRO
5
5
50
GREEN LAP
WHITE LAP
BLUE LAP
TIRE
SHIELD
NITRO
CREDIT
0

» [Arcade] Can you spot nods to *Flicky* and *Out Run*? The trackside scenery in *Rough Racer* is littered with Sega references.

RICH UNDERHILL

Q&A

RICH EXPLAINS HOW HE CONVERTED CRACK DOWN TO THE SPECTRUM AND AMSTRAD CPC

» Ash developed more than 20 C64 games with his coding partner Dave Saunders.

DURING THE DEVELOPMENT DID YOU TRY AND READ THE DISK INSIDE THE ARCADE MACHINE TO GLEAN ANY INFO?

We peeked inside the machine to take a look at the innards, but we never expected to be able to read data from these machines. The art was all bespoke and was created using Deluxe Paint and then converted down to the various platforms by the programmers in question. We never saw source code for any of this work. Looking at how the original platform operated was never particularly useful anyway. We could see what was required and then we would go and try and replicate that visually, while trying to capture as much of the gameplay as we could. We were always up against the clock to get these conversions implemented and shipped, so there wasn't really the luxury of deep analysis or experimentation.

DID THE Z80 CONVERSIONS PRESENT YOU WITH ANY PARTICULAR PROBLEMS?

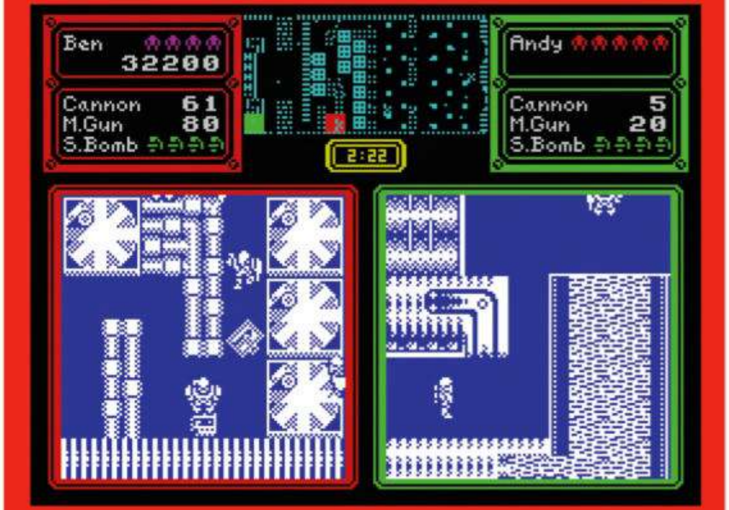
Each level was relatively small and so could be represented in memory by tiles. I used several well-known Spectrum approaches to the scrolling windows and the plethora of registers available compared to my more-familiar 6502 work made things much more comfortable. Apart from the humanoid characters, there were only a few moving objects so those could be handled by a simple software sprite system straight onto the expanded tile map. It was quite a straightforward undertaking and only lack of memory proved to be the challenging aspect on the Z80 platforms.

WHICH CAME FIRST, THE SPECTRUM OR THE CPC VERSION?

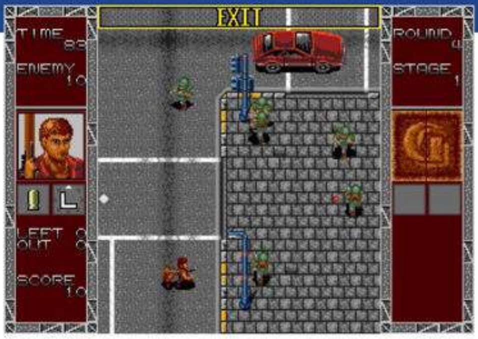
I wrote both at the same time, but any code logic was done on the Spectrum first and then ported to the CPC. I disliked the CPC intensely. The graphics mode we chose took up most of the system memory and the machine was slow compared to the Spectrum for what I was doing. I enjoyed my time with the Spectrum and wish I'd done more on the platform.

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF CRACK DOWN AS AN ACTUAL GAME?

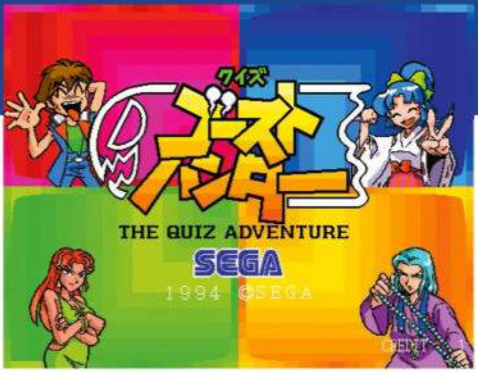
It was a fun game obviously influenced by *Gauntlet*. Maybe that's unfair, but the bomb placement was an interesting mechanic and the two side-by-side windows were pretty innovative for an overhead scroller. I don't think Sega made any really bad coin-ops did they?


Ben
32200
Cannon 61
M.Gun 80
S.Bomb
Andy
Cannon 5
M.Gun 20
S.Bomb
2:22

» [ZX Spectrum] The game's all there, honestly, but you may need to squint to see it!



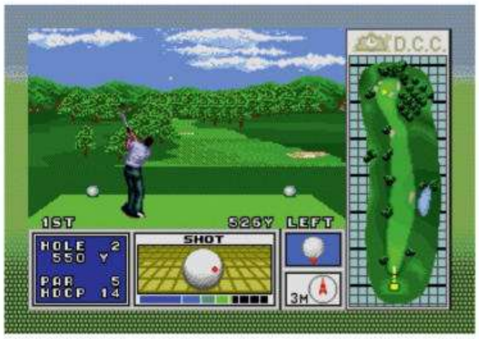
» [Mega Drive] The Present Age was planned for the *Gain Ground* coin-op but never implemented. It was later added to the MD version.



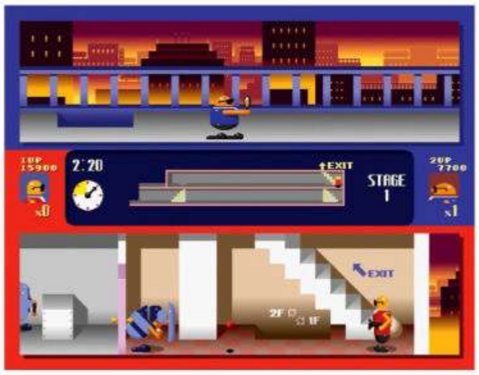
» [Arcade] The final System 24 game was the Japanese exclusive *Ghost Hunter*, released in late 1994.

ASTRO CITY
CRACK DOWN

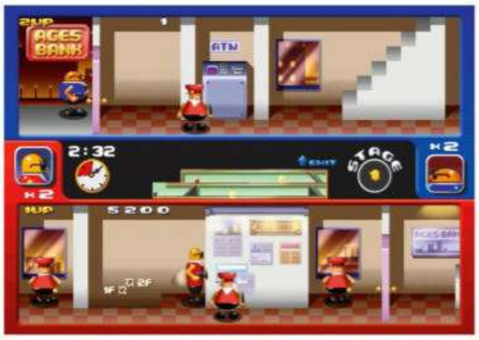
» The arcade versions of *Scramble Spirits*, *Gain Ground*, *Crack Down* and *Bonanza Bros* are among the 37 games included on Sega's 2020 Astro City Mini device.



» [Mega-CD] *Dynamic CC* was ported to the Mega-CD in 1993, but it was only released in Japan.



» [Arcade] Having escaped with the loot, Mobo checks out his appearance while Robo contends with the guards below. *Bonanza Bros* is packed with good humour.



» [PS2] *Bonanza Bros* was ported to the PlayStation 2 in 2004 as part of the *Sega Ages 2500* range.

In Japan a two-player version was issued for Aero City cabs.

"THE SYSTEM'S TOTAL LIFESPAN WAS AN IMPRESSIVE SIX-AND-A-HALF YEARS"

The floppy-disk system was of course susceptible to piracy, particularly as the hardware could generate back-up copies to guard against loss of the original disk. To combat this, Sega replaced the second 68000 in later releases of *Scramble Spirits* and all future titles with a custom security chip that needed to be installed alongside each game.

Over the next two years four more System 24 titles would arrive. The first was *Crack Down*, another game seemingly inspired by Atari that combined the 2D mazes of *Gauntlet* with the windowed view of *Xybots*. Like *Gain Ground*, the gameplay was deeper and more involved than most coin-ops. The same could be said about the next release, the golf game *Super Masters*. Ostensibly it was an update of *Crowns Golf*, which was developed by Nasco and published by Sega in 1984, but it was more computer sim than arcade game. Visually it was the strongest System 24 game to date, with it switching between 3D and isometric viewpoints to depict each shot. Next up was *Rough Racer*, another unnecessary *Super Sprint* clone that was presumably designed as a way of bringing dusty old *Hot-Rod* cabs back into play. It was only available in Japan. The same fate thankfully didn't befall the wonderfully quirky *Bonanza Bros* which was released worldwide in June 1990. This split-screen caper saw two bumbling thieves working together to steal treasures from various locations while avoiding guards and other hazards. Such was the strength of the Sega name at the time, every System 24 title released to this point received a home conversion, with the sole exception of *Rough Racer*. Sega's own consoles were popular destinations, as you'd imagine, with *Scramble Spirits* appearing on the Master System, and *Crack Down* and *Super Masters* (retitled *Arnold Palmer Tournament Golf* in the West) hitting the Mega Drive. *Gain Ground* and *Bonanza Bros* were released for both Sega consoles plus the PC Engine, while *Hot-Rod*, *Scramble Spirits*, *Crack Down* and *Bonanza Bros* were licensed for home computers.

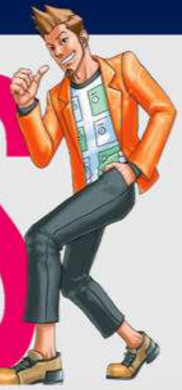
Converting any coin-op was a challenge, but with System 24 the biggest headache was trying to squeeze all of the gameplay elements and visual details onto a smaller screen. Recreating the sheer number of sprites was also an issue, as Arc Developments discovered when working on the home-computer versions of *Crack Down* for US Gold. Speaking to *The One* magazine in December 1989, Atari ST programmer Tim Round revealed that he even attempted to grab the graphics off the floppy disk inside the cab. "We tried reading the disk but nothing came out of it," he said. "So we called up Sega UK and they put us in touch with Sega Japan, and we asked them a few questions about the system. They were really polite and helpful. 'How do you read the info from the disk?' 'Can't tell you.' 'What format is the disk?' 'Can't tell you.' 'What can you tell us about System 24? Anything?' 'Can't tell you.' As I said, very helpful." While the disks were regular 3.5-inch floppies, we now know that they were specially formatted to hold 1.8MB of data, so reading them at the time was not a trivial task.

Back in the arcades, *Bonanza Bros* was followed by a Japanese interactive quiz, *I Forgot My Homework*, and a new golf game, *Dynamic CC* (*Country Club*). The latter introduced a significant hardware change, where some versions of the game dispensed with the floppy disk and instead stored the game data on a mini ROM board. It's not clear why the floppy concept was abandoned, but it was most likely linked to the long-term reliability of the disks and drives. Five further games were released in Japan only – three more quiz games and two mahjong titles – and none of them used disks. This does raise questions about the fallibility of those original floppy systems and how they fare these days. Well thanks to the arcade emulation scene, floppy emulators and disk images can be used which banishes those pesky moving parts while otherwise preserving the integrity of the hardware.

The 14th and final System 24 game was *Ghost Hunter*, a quiz adventure released in September 1994, so its total lifespan was an impressive six-and-a-half years. In terms of Sega's arcade hardware this is third only in length to that of System 16 and NAOMI. What's more, the subsequent System 32 combined the Super-Scaler tech from the Y Board with the rendering capabilities of System 24, and even Sega's Model 1 and 2 boards and utilised System 24's tilemap chip. Not a bad legacy for an 'obscure' system. ✱

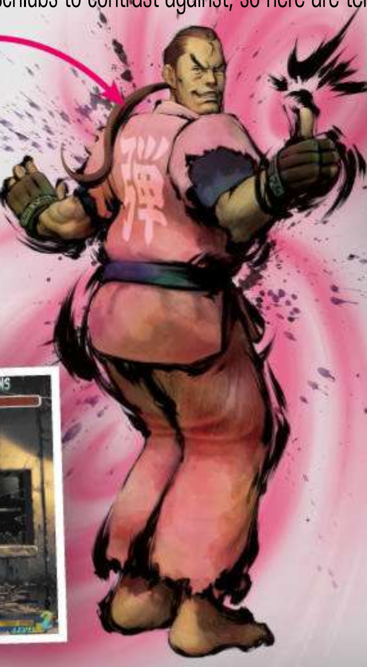
LOVABLE LOSERS

If we desire to be heroes and winners we naturally need villains and rivals, but all of them would feel thoroughly ordinary without regular suckers and schlubs to contrast against, so here are ten downtrodden dorks we can't live without



DAN HIBIKI

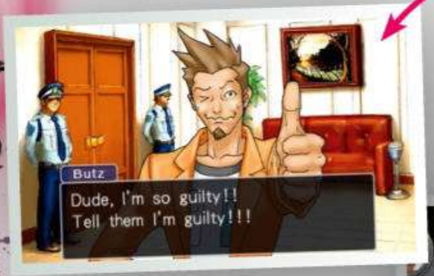
■ Conceived as a jab at the protagonists of SNK's Art Of Fighting series, Street Fighter's most pathetic pugilist could probably spit further than he throws his fireball. He's a pretty snappy dresser though, rocking that pink gi, and if you win a match with him your opponent will never live it down.



31900
06
INSERT 2 COINS
DAN
GEN

LARRY BUTZ

■ Phoenix Wright's first ever client is surprisingly capable of chatting up women, given that he's seemingly incapable of doing anything else right. Unfortunately he's equally good at alienating them, and he can't hold down a job either. As his friends say, when something smells, it's usually the Butz.



Butz

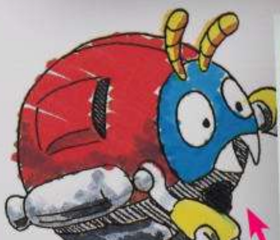
Dude, I'm so guilty!!
Tell them I'm guilty!!!

GLASS JOE

■ Your first opponent in Punch-Out!! seems to prefer baguettes to boxing, but he never gives up, as proven by his record of one win and 99 losses. If you ever felt bad losing to Mike Tyson, take solace in the fact that he was defeated by this Parisian, erm, powerhouse.

6
0:11
ROUND 1
VS.

674330
ARMS ∞
1UP=0
2
CREL



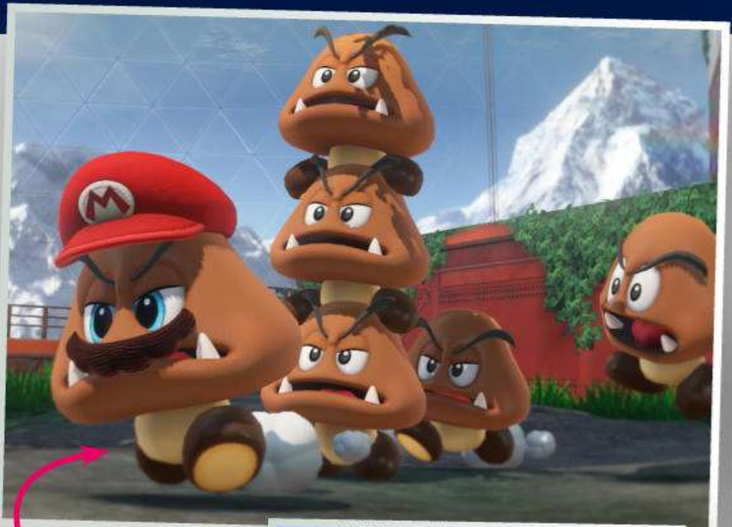
SCORE 0
TIME 0:03
RINGS 0
SONIC 3

MOTO BUG

■ Robotnik's first line of attack is captivatingly crap, trundling tirelessly toward Sonic for a fight in which it can't possibly prevail. In a way it's inspirational – the Moto Bug never stops moving forward despite life's challenges, serving as a shining beacon of perseverance for us all.

REBEL INFANTRY

■ Metal Slug's crazy cannon fodder are so well-animated that you can't help but enjoy their antics. Watch as they tiptoe along the rooftops, marvel as they laugh at your death, laugh maniacally as they scream and flee in terror when you respawn right in front of them.

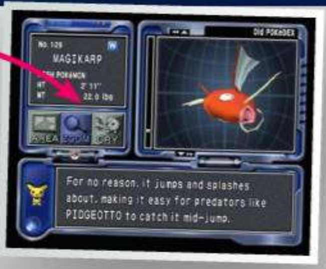


GOOMBA

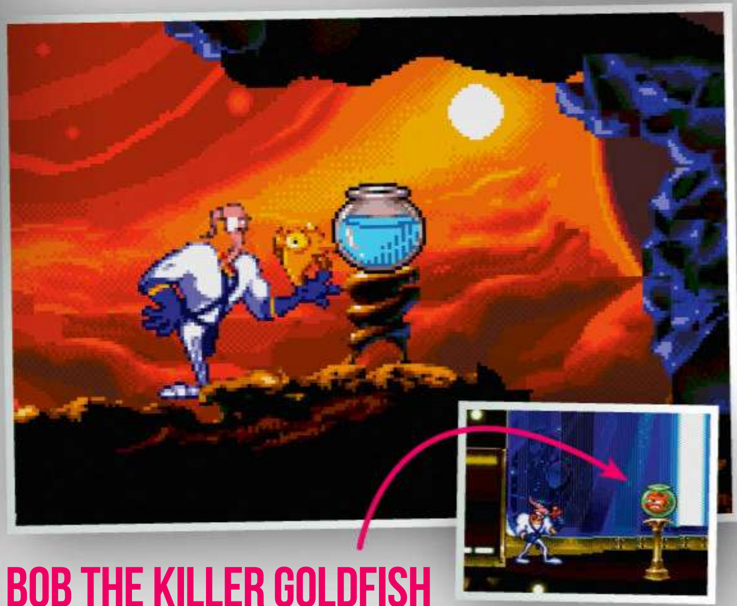
■ For being basic baddies, the Goombas are actually pretty intelligent. Having realised that they're most vulnerable to Mario's jumps, in recent games they've started to stack themselves high. We respect the hustle, but they're still never more than the most minor nuisance for the world's most-famous plumber.

MAGIKARP

■ When Game Freak gave you the choice to spend 500 Poké-bucks to buy one of these, it was teaching you an important lesson – don't fall for scams. This fishy fellow starts with no useful moves at all, but if you make the effort it'll evolve into a fearsome Gyarados.

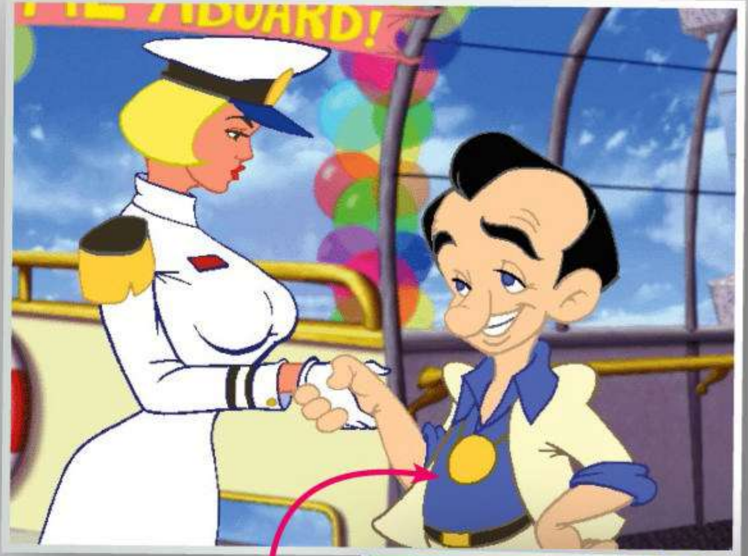


For no reason, it jumps and splashes about, making it easy for predators like PIDGEOTTO to catch it mid-jump.



BOB THE KILLER GOLDFISH

■ You'd expect Bob to be one of Earthworm Jim's fiercest opponents, but the aquatic aggressor is profoundly unthreatening. Bob is defeated in the first game when his bowl is knocked to the floor, and in the second game Jim just plucks him straight from the bowl and eats him whole.



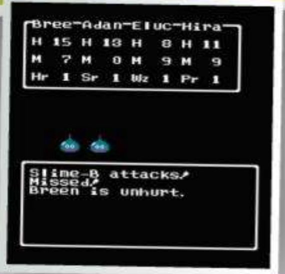
WHAT A PERVERT!!
MAGAZINES

LARRY LAFFER

■ Famed as much for his receding hairline and short stature as he is his leisure suits, Larry Laffer is exactly the kind of guy you aspire not to be. You'd think that this hapless chap's overactive libido would be problematic as a result, but he actually does OK for himself.

SLIME

■ In the Dragon Quest games, the Slime is the weakest adversary you'll encounter. Even when multiple Slimes combine into a King Slime, it's just a drippy, grinning imbecile with a crown. But who gets the merchandising millions? Not the heroes, that's for sure. Maybe the slimes are on to something.



```
Bree-Adan-Eluc-Hira
H 15 H 13 H  8 H 11
M  7 M  0 M  9 M  9
Hr  1 Sr  1 Wz  1 Pr  1
```

```
Slime-B attacks!
Missed!
Breen is unhurt.
```

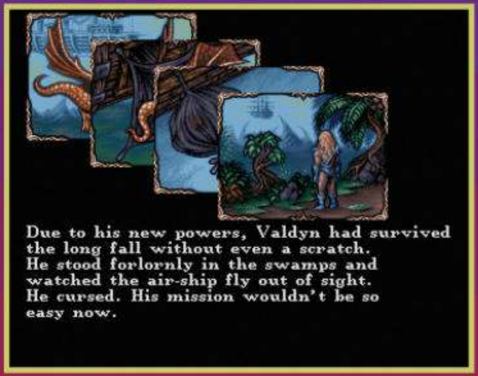
THE MAKING OF

UNLEASHED INTO A CROWDED AMIGA GAME MARKET, LIONHEART CAME OUT FIGHTING WITH CONSOLE-COMPETING GAMEPLAY AND VIVID VISUALS. NOWADAYS PLACED ON A PEDESTAL BY RETRO GAMERS AND COLLECTORS, THE LEGACY OF THIS AMBITIOUS PLATFORM ADVENTURE BURNS BRIGHT

WORDS BY GRAHAM PEMBREY

» Henk Nieborg is a veteran pixel artist who created the graphics and animation for *Lionheart*.

» Erik Simon is development manager at 4A Games and was the game designer for *Lionheart*.



Due to his new powers, Valdyn had survived the long fall without even a scratch. He stood forlornly in the swamps and watched the air-ship fly out of sight. He cursed. His mission wouldn't be so easy now.

» Erwin Kloibhofer (left) and Henk Nieborg working on *Lionheart* in 1992.

The story of *Lionheart* can be traced back to the demoscene of the late Eighties, when talented coders formed communities around the creation of vibrant technical demos and colourful cracked intro screens for home computers. Game designer Erik Simon was a member of one such group based in Germany known as The Exceptions. After joining forces with other respected demoscene figures to form Thalion Software, the collective worked towards a shared ambition to create the most technically groundbreaking games to grace the Amiga. *Lionheart* was among the final releases from the studio and lived up to its vision by making the absolute most of the hardware available.

> "WE WANTED TO GET AS CLOSE TO A CONSOLE FEEL AS WE COULD"
> Erik Simon

Sharp, vibrant artwork and smooth animation are pride of place when you play *Lionheart*, and these aspects of the game were the handiwork of Dutch pixel artist Henk Nieborg. For both Henk and the programmer Erwin Kloibhofer, the game marked their first big break in the videogame industry. "Erwin and I met in the Netherlands. We soon planned to make a game together because we simply clicked as human beings, and we wanted to join our talents and dream about being real game developers someday," Henk tells us. "We made a game together in our spare time called *Ghost Battle* that was inspired by many of my favourite horror movies and arcade games. A fun fact about *Ghost Battle* is that we developed it many miles apart, me in the Netherlands and Erwin in Austria, by sending our latest bits for the game on 3.5-inch floppy disks by snail mail." The pair took *Ghost Battle* to the Cologne Amiga Gaming Convention in October 1990 where they met Erik Simon from Thalion. "He offered not only to publish our current game, but also in-house jobs at Thalion headquarters to work on a new project. We couldn't resist this opportunity and we both relocated to Germany," continues Henk.

The new project Erik had in mind was *Lionheart*. "Erik must have somehow envisioned our potential as a team," says Henk. "He wanted to make the most ambitious platformer on the Amiga and use pretty much all of the available video modes and other tricks the Amiga could produce." Combined with this starting vision, Henk already had some material that would help form the basis for the game. "I had started working on a new action project at home. I'd made a test 16-colour background and a running main sprite which was the start for *Lionheart*."

Erik would oversee production as the game designer and a project manager. He was not only seeking to rival the best

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

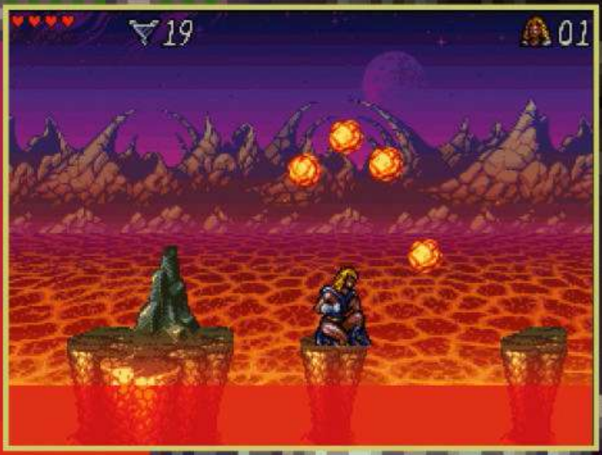
CHAMBERS OF SHAOLIN
SYSTEM: C64, AMIGA
YEAR: 1989

NO SECOND PRIZE (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA, ATARI ST
YEAR: 1992

AMBERMOON
SYSTEM: AMIGA
YEAR: 1993

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** THALION SOFTWARE
- » **DEVELOPER:** THALION SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PLATFORM:** AMIGA
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

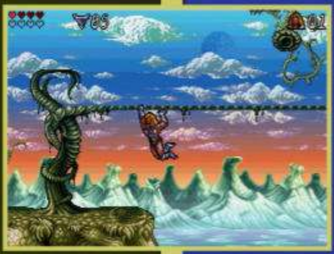


A ROARING SUCCESS

HOW LIONHEART WON OVER AMIGA GAMERS

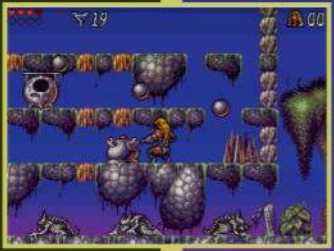
GRAPHICAL GRANDEUR

■ With colourful backgrounds that seem to stretch far into the distance and intricate sprites, *Lionheart* was a visual spectacle. The animation was smooth too, with little touches like your character swaying precariously as you teeter on the edge of a platform showing great attention to detail.



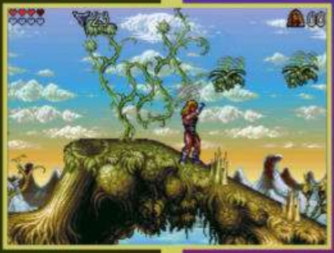
NEXT-LEVEL GAME DESIGN

■ Erik devised a series of levels that are large and diverse in their environments – taking you past forests, caves, volcanoes and an airship – and also their structure and the tactics they require of you. Exploring different paths and finding secret areas keeps things interesting.



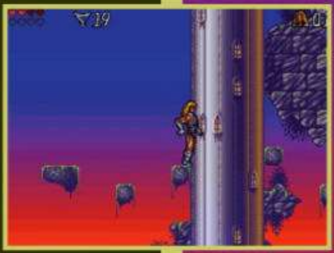
MASTERFUL MOVES

■ After holding the joystick button to raise your sword, pushing the stick in different directions unleashes a variety of twists, hacks and slashes. "This was simply our solution to not having as many buttons at our disposal as console controllers," Erik explains. It's a very clever hack.



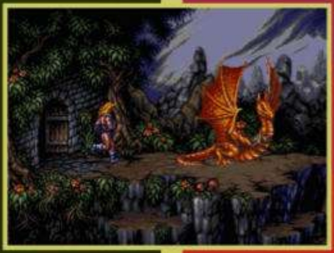
ATMOSPHERIC AUDIO

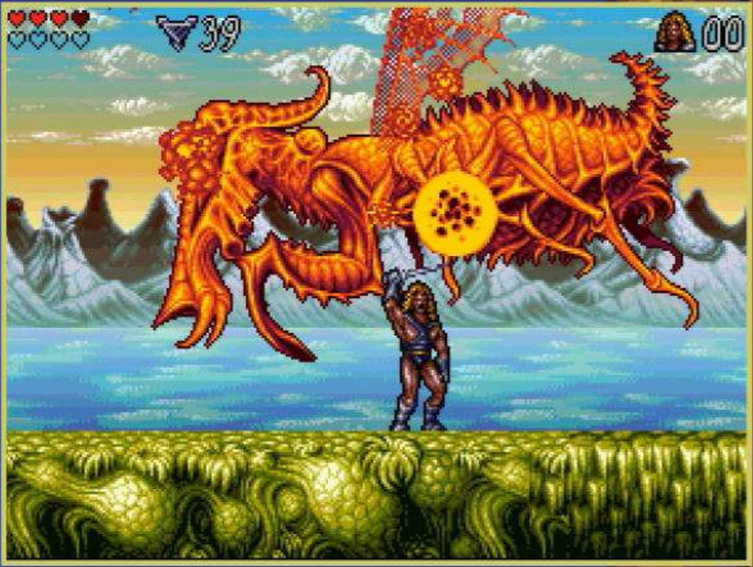
■ The haunting Gothic soundtrack by Matthias Steinwachs turns the atmosphere level up a notch. Bouncing between orchestral bombast and calming synth ambience, it works brilliantly with the setting. *Amiga Format* called it, "A powerful sampled soundtrack, which changes depending on your position in the level."



CREATURE COMFORTS

■ Later levels of the game see you riding on a dragon and a speedy dinosaur. Combine that with several super-sized boss creatures and *Lionheart* has a lot of unexpected and enjoyable encounters with mythical creatures for those fantasy fans among us.





» [Amiga] Valdyn celebrates after bringing down an insectoid-looking boss mid-flight.

platform games on the Amiga, but those on other platforms too. "We wanted to get as close to a console feel as we could and would analyse the strong points of the best 16-bit jump-and-run games of the era," Erik explains. Was he aiming to push the hardware to new heights like he had in his demoscene days? "Yes and no. There wasn't much ground to push the Amiga hardware because it could do all the things that you need for good-looking games right out of the box. However, we wanted to use the hardware in an optimal way. For example, we always wondered why no one seemed to use different video modes in different levels depending on their theme. So we did that – for example, the cave level featured the rarely used 64-colour half-brite mode."

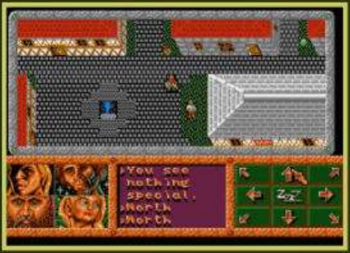
The cave setting Erik mentions is one of 14 levels spanning a variety of dark-fantasy environments. Through precise platforming and melee combat, you journey through these areas in control of Valdyn, a rebellious swordsman from a tribe of cat-people, who has been ordered to recover a holy relic known as the Lionheart. You'll find yourself clambering along vines, sprinting down slopes to make long jumps and striking enemies with a diverse range of sword attacks at your disposal. This varied moveset elevated the action above simpler hack-and-slash platformers available for the Amiga at the time.

Lionheart also provided several difficulty modes that alter the game in a more meaningful way than was conventional at the time. By selecting the Hard setting, to quote the manual, "You will not only be attacked by harder enemies; we also changed the levels. That means you have got two games in one." How did Erik and the team come to put this mechanic in place? "I had a simple level editor that made designing the levels quite efficient," he says. "We thought that instead of just bumping up the enemy count, damage and health points, we could simply store the levels twice and carefully hand-edit more difficult situations and level extensions. I wonder why other games didn't choose that approach. It wasn't that much extra work."

While Erik refined level structures, Henk was busy polishing off the intricate background artwork and sprites. He cites fantasy-art books, comics, films and console and arcade games as some of his inspirations. "My initial inspiration came from a comic called *El Mercenario* by Vincent Segrelles which

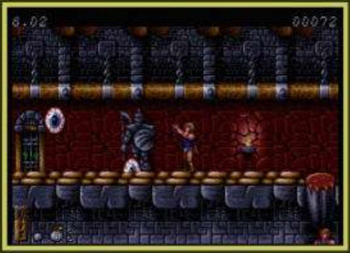
THALION FANTASIES

OTHER ETHEREAL ADVENTURES FROM THE STUDIO



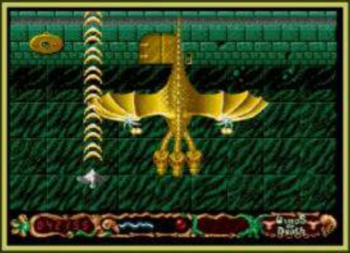
DRAGONFLIGHT

■ Released in 1990 after three years in development, *Dragonflight* delivered role-playing action with hints of *Zelda* and *Ultima*. Guiding a party around dungeons and forests while battling monsters and managing your inventory, it would set the tone for Thalion's later RPGs.



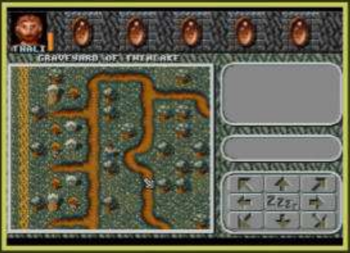
GHOST BATTLE

■ You can find early ideas that would appear in *Lionheart* in Henk Nieborg and Erwin Kloibhofer's fantasy platformer, which landed them jobs with the studio. There's a touch of *Ghosts 'N Goblins* to the action, with some very *Shadow Of The Beast*-inspired enemy sprites too.



WINGS OF DEATH

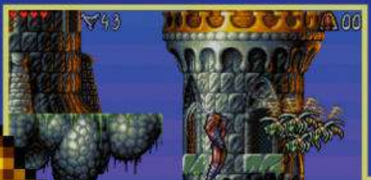
■ Thalion may have had a penchant for fantasy, but it was also adept at genre-hopping, turning its hand to flight simulators, racers and fighting games. *Wings Of Death* adds top-down shooter to the list, and features a dragon protagonist that grows as you collect power-ups.



AMBERSTAR

■ A more advanced RPG affair than *Dragonflight* had been, *Amberstar* was packed with content and provided many hours of adventuring and exploration. Third-person indoor sections mixed with first-person city and dungeon areas, where you could build up a party and your character stats.

» [Amiga] Leaping attacks are useful for felling the many enemies that come at you from above.

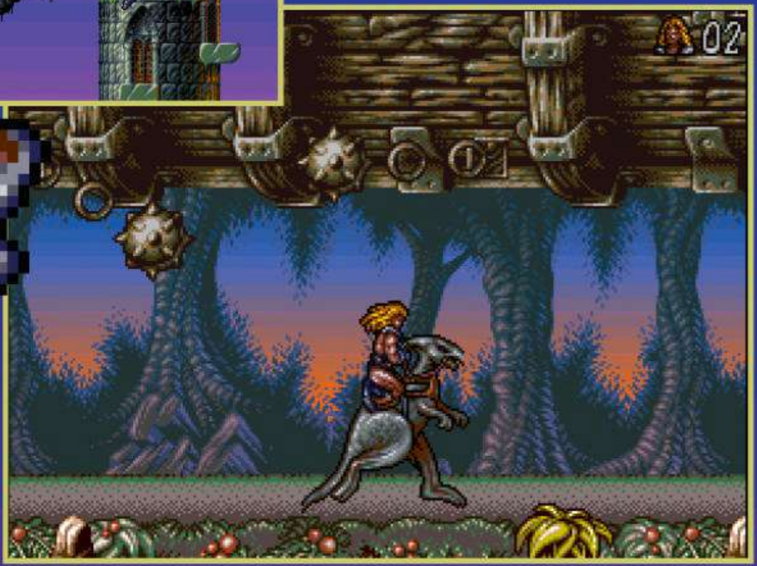


> "I THINK WE SQUEEZED ALL WE COULD OUT OF THAT BOX IN THOSE 14 MONTHS OF DEVELOPMENT TIME"
> **Henk Nieborg**

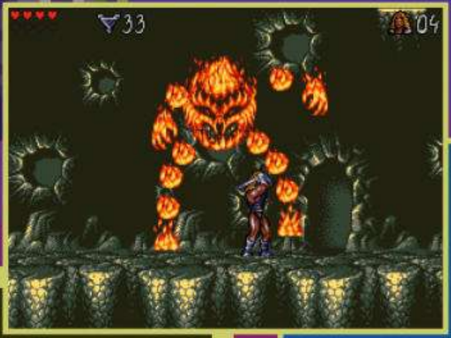
had incredible hand-painted fantasy artwork. The 16-colour rocky stage later in the game was the very first thing I drew for *Lionheart* with this style and colour reference in mind." Console games were also a reference point, "Especially arcade games by Capcom and Konami which had a much higher production quality and better hardware compared to games for the home market," Henk continues. "Checking out the latest Japanese import console games on the Sega Mega Drive, SNES and PC Engine was also a lot of fun and contributed to the game design."

Henk and Erwin lived in their workplace for the first half-year of making the game, which shows how much crunch time went into making *Lionheart*. Newly arrived in Germany, they shared a small living and working space with one another and the trusty Amigas they had brought with them from home. "This was our working space and home for the first six months as we didn't have our own place to live yet," says Henk. "Erik would pop in quite often to have a look at the progress and discuss new things he wanted in the game, to see if they were plausible. Or just to wake me up in the afternoon as we were also sleeping in the office!"

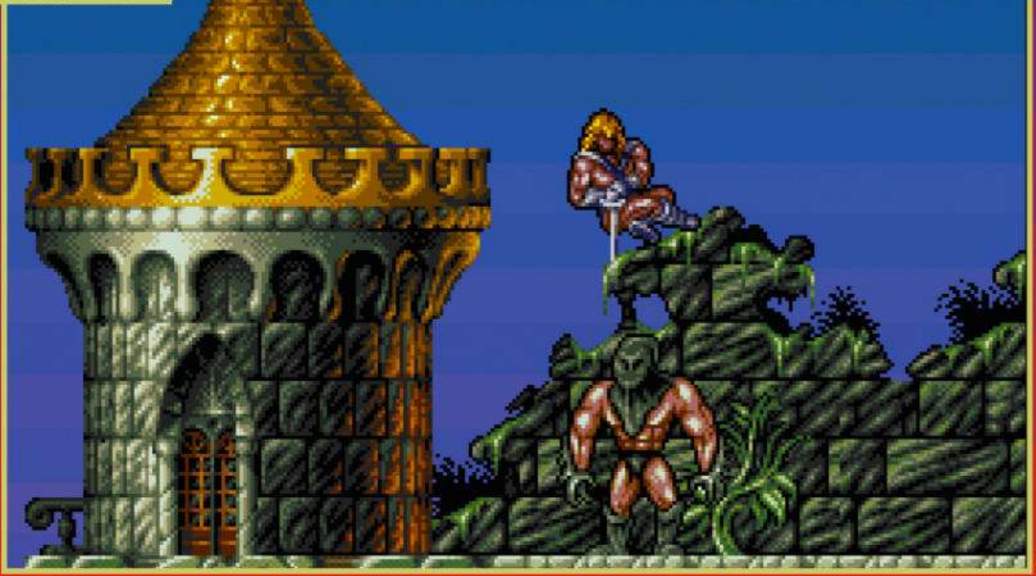
It's clear that Henk holds Erik, Erwin and his old Thalion colleagues in high regard. "Erik set very high standards but somehow knew I was able to pull it off graphically. That really challenged me as an artist in a ▶



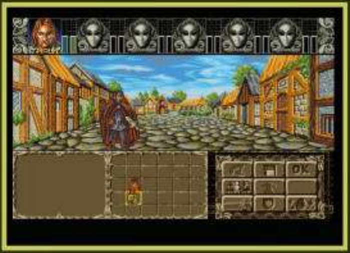
» [Amiga] The dinosaur level has an arcade game feel as you ride beneath a moving airship.



» [Amiga] This dancing fire demon awaits you at the end of the challenging lava level.

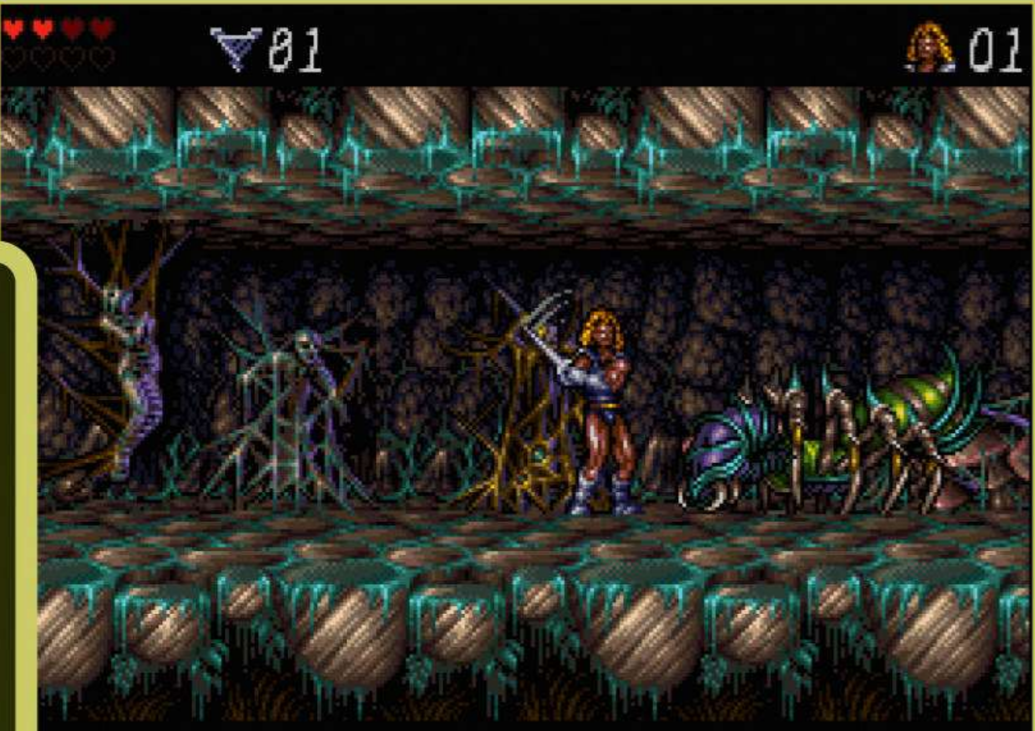


» [Amiga] Dropping onto enemies with your sword does a great deal of damage.

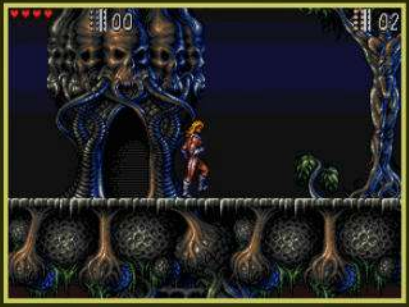


AMBERMOON

■ Regarded by RPG fans as one of the greatest Amiga games, this sequel to *Amberstar* was epic in scope. It boasted a 3D engine for smooth first-person movement and turn-based fighting. A third game in the series was cancelled when Thalion closed its doors.



» [Amiga] The team utilised a rarely used 64-colour video mode to make the cave scenes shine.



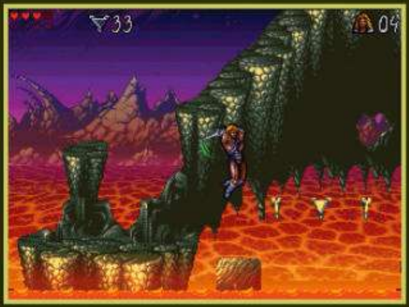
HIDDEN DEPTHS

UNLOCKING LIONHEART'S SECRET LEVEL AND ALTERNATIVE ENDING

■ The world of *Lionheart* is full of secrets and hidden paths. You could argue the game has some parallels with the level design of the *Turrican* games, in that many areas allow you to explore vertically as well as horizontally to find shrouded ledges to clamber up and grab power-ups or precious extra lives. The jewel in the crown of these secret locations is that *Lionheart* contains a hidden level which sets you up for an alternative, happier ending when you reach the grand finale.

To play this hidden level, in the volcanic stage of the game, you need to knock a rock into the lava and then whack it with your sword until it carries you like a rowboat towards a secret door. The passage leads to a seemingly HR Giger-inspired level with dark, twisting alien sculptures in the background. Discover the amulet here, and then when you reach the end of the game Vlaydn will use it to lift the curse from his lover Ilene.

Alternatively, the game will end with a despondent Vlaydn returning the holy relic he first set out to find, but without a way to heal Ilene. Reviewers picked up on how these different paths added additional replay value to the adventure.



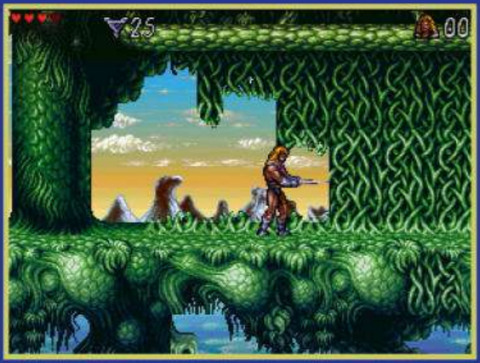
"WE FIGURED THAT IF EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY DIDN'T PUSH OUR SALES, THEN SUPPORTING THE PLATFORM JUST WASN'T FEASIBLE ANYMORE"
Erik Simon

▶ positive way." Henk says there was also a great atmosphere when they spent time at the Thalion headquarters in the city of Gütersloh in Germany. "We were a very driven team consisting of only ten motivated people working on four in-house projects at the same time: *Lionheart*, *No Second Prize*, *Trex Warriors* and *Ambermoon*. The work atmosphere and the people at Thalion motivated me to give the very best of me. I was growing a lot as an artist back then. We also spent a lot of time with most of the other employees outside office hours so we also became friends. It was just a great group of talented people together wanting to push the hardware and ourselves to its limits. Just kids having fun."

The team's initial plan for *Lionheart* had been to create something larger in scope than the end result, with various ideas being dropped along the way. Despite not being a particularly huge game, Henk feels the team still crammed in a great deal of technical wizardry into the levels they created. "I think we squeezed all we could out of that box in those 14 months of development time. We had 16-colour modes with copper (gradient) colour backdrops as parallax, eight-colour dual-plane scrolling modes together with crazy copper gradients thrown over my pixel artwork to make it look even more colourful. The amount of stuff we crammed in was incredible and still running smoothly at 50fps."

As Christmas 1992 approached, the team began feeling the pressure to wrap up on development. "I remember Erik had to fight with the directors and convince them of *Lionheart*'s quality and add more time to the project. It was apparent the game had started to become something special," Henk recalls. Ultimately the strain towards the end of the game's production would lead to Henk and Erwin leaving Thalion. "We'd been working long hours over weekends – they call that crunch time now. Management's idea was to publish *Lionheart* before Christmas 1992 but no matter how hard we worked we just didn't make it. Because of that, they wanted us to work additionally over Christmas too which felt very unappreciative. That was the breaking point for me and Erwin and we started looking for other opportunities."

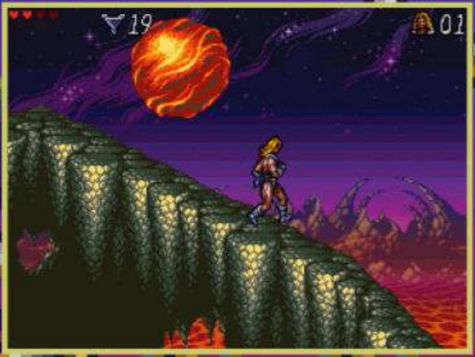
When *Lionheart* was finally finished in early 1993, Henk and Erwin sent a demo disk of the game to Psygnosis in a speculative attempt to see if the company would be interested in taking them on. They were invited over to interview and decided instantly to call it a day at Thalion. "One day before our flight to the UK, we told Thalion about leaving. This was of course very sad news for our friends on the work floor, but management also weren't happy." Henk explains that he and Erwin were grilled separately by the managing director of the company about their decision. "This wasn't a great experience for a youngster, especially the fact that German wasn't my native language, and it can hit quite hard being worked on by an experienced manager. I was so confused after

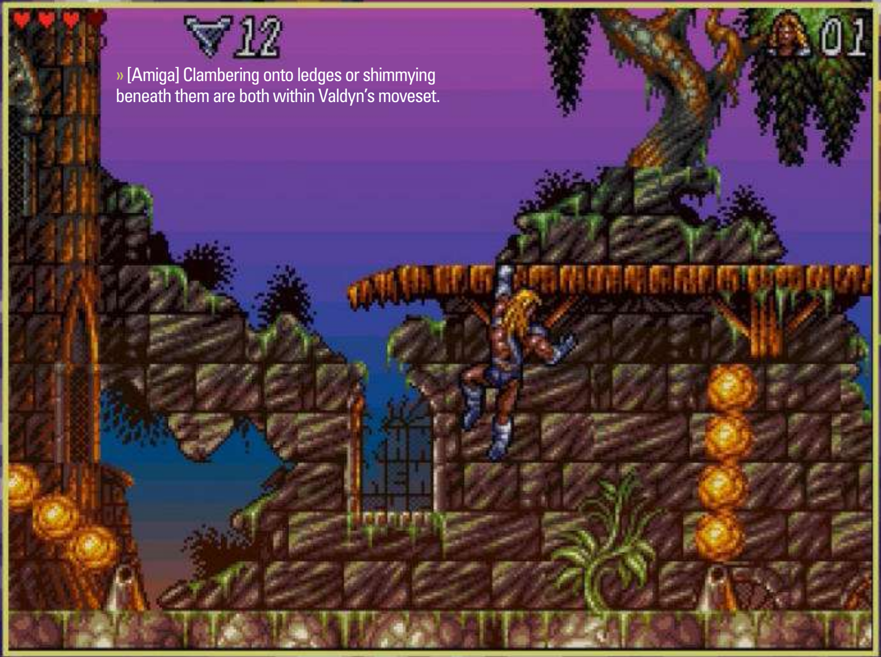


this moment that I wanted to quit the gaming scene altogether. After a talk with Erwin though, this was quickly fixed again. Fortunately, we went to the interview with Psygnosis the next day and stayed there for another great four years to create two games, *Flink* for the Mega Drive and *Lomax* for the PlayStation. I have to point out though that my time with my friends at Thalion was just really fantastic and a very important turn at the start of my career."

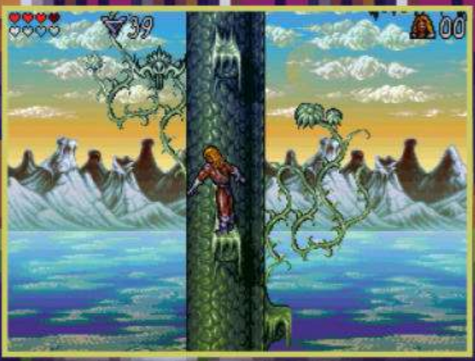
Despite glowing critical acclaim from publications like *The One Amiga* magazine, which declared "buy it or be sad" alongside a 91% rating, *Lionheart* was not a runaway sales success. Erik says it had been a conscious decision at Thalion not to include copy protection with the game, as was the norm at that time in the piracy-riddled Amiga game market. "We knew that copy protection at this point in time, when a lot of specialised cracking groups had a lot of experience on the hardware, was a waste of time and effort," he says. "We figured that if exceptional quality didn't push our sales, then supporting the platform just wasn't feasible anymore. Sadly, it played out pretty much like that." That same year, Thalion would close its doors and its members would move on to other positions in the games industry. For Erik this eventually led to his current role at 4A Games, the studio responsible for the *Metro* series of shooters.

You don't have to look far on Amiga websites, forums and social media groups to find *Lionheart* getting some well-deserved kudos. Boxed copies of the game in good condition are highly collectible. There's even a high-resolution remake of the game by French superfan DJ Thunder (also known as Byron 3D Games Studio) written in Java which you can check out online. Erik says he finds it satisfying that people still talk about the game. "*Lionheart* is one of the games in my career that I'm still proud of, even after all these years, so of course the continued interest makes me happy," he says. Henk agrees entirely. "It makes me proud and feel privileged that I had such a big part in this special project which really launched my career as an artist and designer. I was always very passionate about the look and creation of *Lionheart*'s visuals and I still have that same approach many years later. One thing for sure is that it was a personal success and opened some more doors for me which I'm grateful for. The fact that people nowadays still think it's one of the greatest games on the good old Amiga makes me even more proud. It's also unreal to think this all happened about 30 years ago. Dang!" ✱





» [Amiga] Clambering onto ledges or shimmying beneath them are both within Valdyn's moveset.



» [Amiga] This 'teetering-on-the-edge' animation is a fantastic touch.

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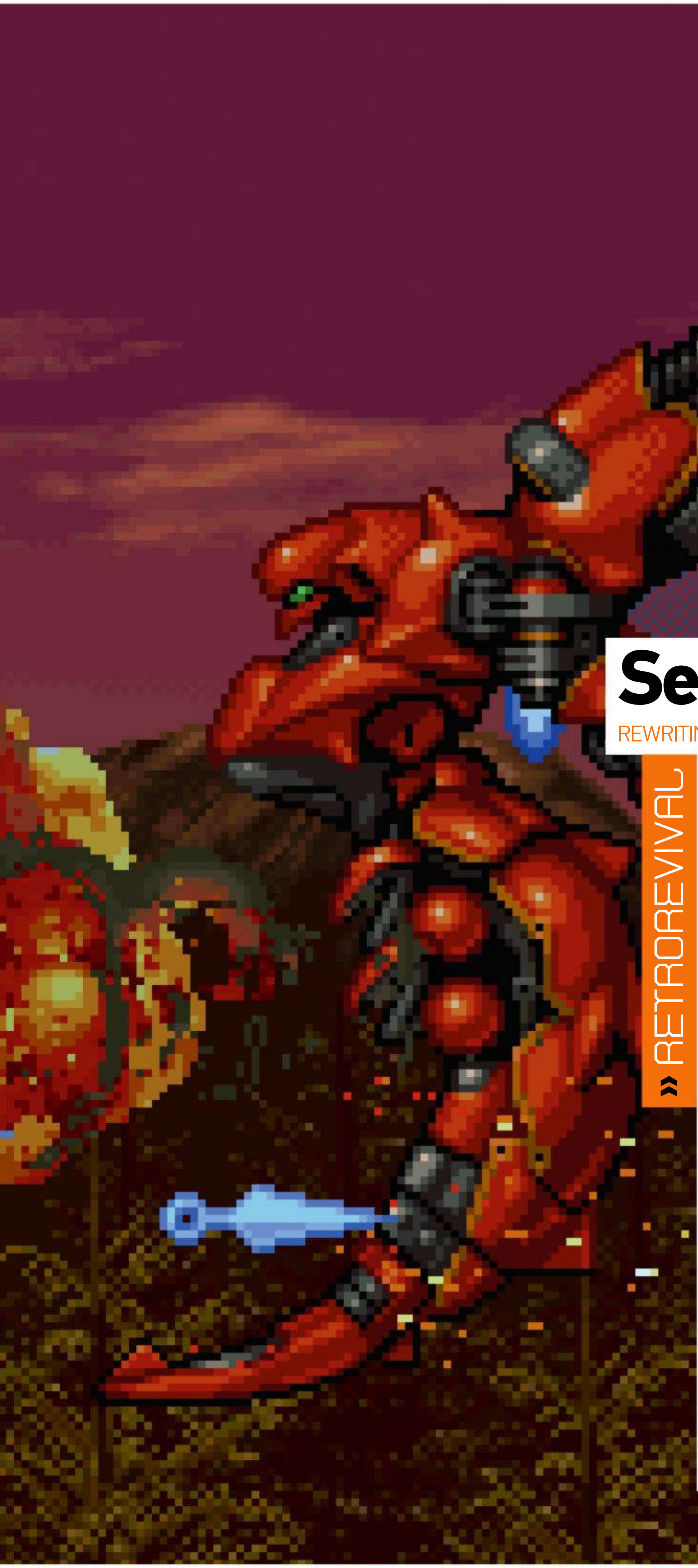


Sengoku Blade

REWRITING HISTORY

» SATURN » 1996 » PSIKYO

Even though many of its shmups are arcade ports, one of the things I love about the Saturn is its sheer diversity. Sure you've got the big hitters like *Radiant Silvergun*, *Battle Garegga* and *Hyper Duel* (often with big prices to match) but you also have quirkier offerings like *Twinkle Star Sprites*, *Guardian Force* and *Cotton Boomerang* (again with prices that will make your wallet cry).

Sengoku Blade is another title that is sadly rising in price (I bought it again recently after foolishly selling it several years back) but it's a highly satisfying shmup with an extremely distinctive setting that's well worth seeking out.

For those that may not know, *Sengoku Blade* (known in the West as *Tengai*) is actually a sequel to *Sengoku Ace* (*Samurai Aces* in the West) Psikyo's very first game. It's also the first shmup Psikyo released that doesn't scroll vertically. It otherwise carries on many of the themes found in *Sengoku Ace*.

Despite being based on the Sengoku period, Japan's history takes a firm backseat with Psikyo's game introducing insane magic attacks, all manner of frightening monstrosities and the kind of metallic behemoths that certainly didn't appear in any history books but would be instantly familiar if you've played either *Sengoku Ace* or *Strikers 1945*.

Several of the characters return from the original game and they all play differently to each other thanks to having their own unique attacks, smart bombs and secondary attacks (activated by holding down the fire button). This means there's plenty of variety as you tackle *Sengoku Blade*'s beautiful-looking levels with the five heroes that are initially available.

The Saturn conversion is excellent and while it doesn't add many extras as some Saturn shooters do, it's still worth tracking down. If you can't justify the £130 price tag it currently commands much cheaper digital alternatives are available on contemporary consoles. So if you're looking for a bonkers take on Japanese history, give Psikyo's shooter a try. ✱

ULTIMATE GUIDE

SHINING FORCE

SEGA'S SHINING FORCE MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE FIRST TACTICAL RPGS TO BE RELEASED BUT OVER 30 YEARS LATER, ITS UNIQUE WORLDVIEW AND CAST OF MEMORABLE CHARACTERS ENSURE IT HAS LOST NONE OF ITS SHINE

WORDS BY ASHLEY DAY

Turn-based tactics games have arguably never been bigger. In 2022 alone we had *Triangle Strategy*, *Mario + Rabbids: Sparks Of Hope*, *Marvel's Midnight Suns* and *Tactics Ogre Reborn*, to name just a few, with *Fire Emblem Engage* squeaking out this January. You'd be forgiven for thinking it was one of the most popular genres on the planet. But it hasn't always been that way. Go back to the early Nineties, long before even *Final Fantasy Tactics* or *XCOM* had debuted, and a decade before *Fire Emblem* first came to the West, and the genre was virtually unknown. That is, except for one shining example.

The *Shining* series made its debut in 1991 with the release of *Shining In The Darkness* for Mega Drive. This Sega-published dungeon crawler was the brainchild of two brothers, Shugo and Hiroyuki Takahashi who had previously worked at Enix on the early *Dragon Quest* games before going independent. Working under the name Sonic Software Planning, they collaborated with Climax Entertainment to create *Shining In The Darkness*, which took the *Dragon Quest* formula and presented it from a new, novel viewpoint; the first-person perspective.

Much as *Phantasy Star* had done on Master System, *Shining In The Darkness* wowed Mega Drive owners with an improbable immersive view. It was a real head turner, and when coupled with a deep sense of exploration, it made for a compelling RPG experience. It's easy to see why it was popular, which makes the decision to follow it up with a completely different genre of RPG quite surprising.

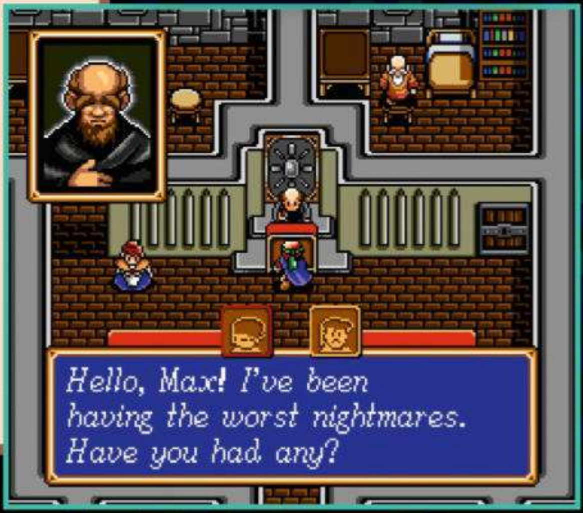
Shining Force debuted on Mega Drive in 1992 and retained the world of *Shining In The Darkness*, a fantastical realm of wizards and warriors populated by a distinctive mix of humans, dwarves and anthropomorphic beast-men, but switched the perspective to a top-down one so you could command a large army rather than a small party of two or three. Though the similar *Fire Emblem* had released on Famicom a couple of years earlier, the Takahashi brothers say they were inspired not by this but the much more obscure *Silver Ghost*, an RTS-RPG hybrid released for PC-88 in 1988. The young designers were impressed by the way *Silver Ghost* allowed players to oversee and command multiple characters at once and thought this would work well in a turn-based game.

The core appeal of *Shining Force* is, of course, its tactical battles and although it wasn't the first game to feature them, it is almost certainly the first of any note to be released in the West. Prior RPGs had focussed on small parties of heroes fighting in relatively contained random battles, but in *Shining Force*, the scale felt so much grander. A single battle could last the best part of an hour and felt like a significant event, while the level design offered seemingly endless scope to carve your own path. Moving your band of heroes across the terrain, turn by turn, navigating the space to find the best tactical advantage, charging in with your knights, while archers and mages hang back to deliver death from a distance. All of it is a perfect recipe for gaming satisfaction. It's no wonder the genre has stood the test of time with these basic principles at its core.

Years later, *Shining Force* remains a compelling proposition not just because of these fundamentals but also because of its unique worldview. Like *Dragon Quest* before it, there's a charm and friendliness to the world ▶

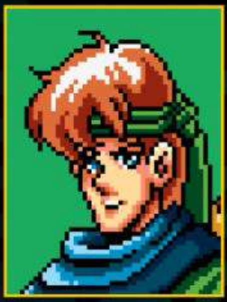
> "A SINGLE BATTLE COULD LAST THE BEST PART OF AN HOUR AND FELT LIKE A SIGNIFICANT EVENT"

» [Mega Drive] Just like *Dragon Quest*, you can save at a church and revive there, retaining your experience points, for a fee.



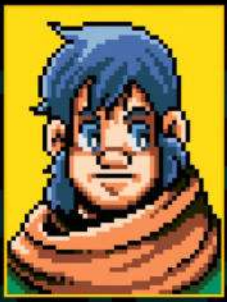
Hello, Max! I've been having the worst nightmares. Have you had any?

THE SHINING FORCE MEET THE TEAM



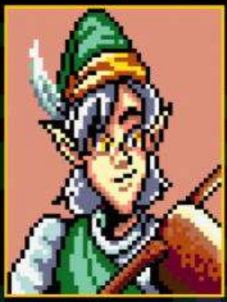
MAX

■ The hero of *Shining Force*. You control Max throughout your adventure and he's mandatory in each battle. If he dies, it's game over.



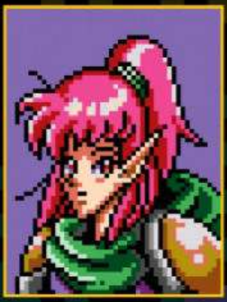
LOWE

■ The party's first healer and Max's best friend. He can cure poison status aliments and can be promoted to the rank of Vicar.



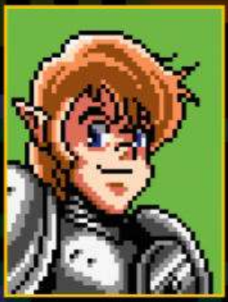
HANS

■ A member of Max's force from the very beginning, Hans is a highly capable archer; one of the most useful classes in the game.



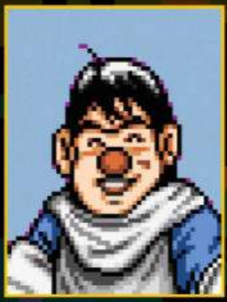
TAO

■ The first magic user to join the force, Tao can set fire to enemies. She is the sister of Diane, as well as Wendy in *Shining Force Gaiden*.



KEN

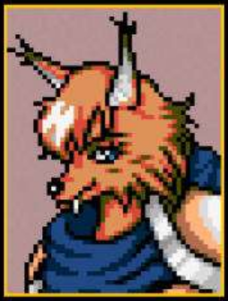
■ The first centaur to join the force, Ken later appears as an NPC in *Shining Force Gaiden*, in which you can recruit his son, Apis.



LUKE

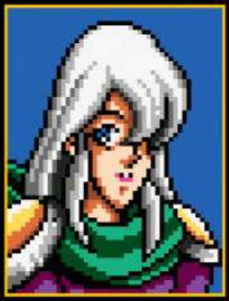
■ Called Lug in the Japanese version, Luke is a warrior dwarf who can be promoted to Gladiator. Also appears in *Shining Force Gaiden*.

THE SHINING FORCE MEET THE TEAM



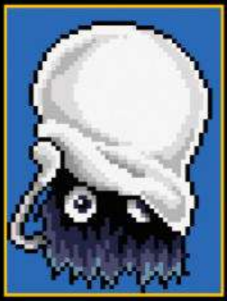
ALEF

■ A Foxling mage with a powerful bolt spell. Foxlings are one of the rarest races. Only six are seen throughout the whole *Shining* series.



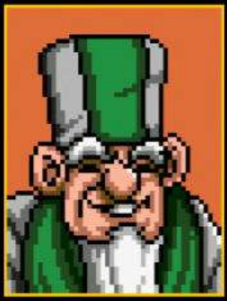
ANRI

■ The princess of Guardiana and a powerful mage. Level-up Anri enough and she'll become one of your most valuable members.



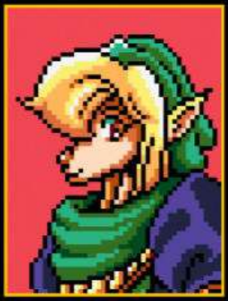
DOMINGO

■ Find an egg in the mage school and you can later hatch it to reveal Domingo. He's pretty weak but does have some great magic attacks.



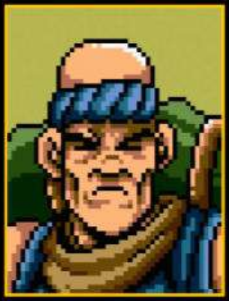
TORASU

■ A very capable healer. Promote him and level-up his Aura spell, and he can heal the whole party at once, which is very helpful.



KHRIS

■ A healer and member of the rarely seen Kyantol race. Draws inspiration from the pointy-eared Gelflings in *The Dark Crystal*.



GONG

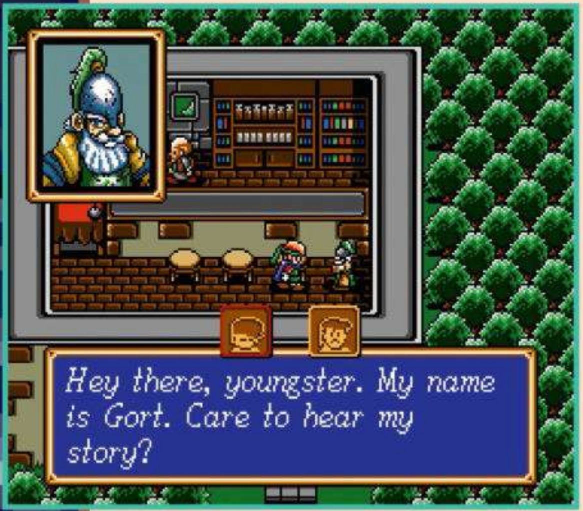
■ A warrior monk and healer, and the first optional character. You can recruit Gong from the hut near to the game's first battle.

▶ that makes you want to explore every inch… something you can actually do in this game. While most strategy RPGs focus squarely on the battles, with a little bit of base management thrown in for good measure, *Shining Force* took inspiration from the Takahashis' JRPG background to offer a continent-spanning journey. In between battles, the heroes visit a new town where they can keep up with the story, buy new weapons and equipment, and discover a few surprises.

The town exploration remains one of *Shining Force*'s key differentiators, giving it a feeling that's somewhere between a JRPG and an SRPG, and offers a great opportunity to immerse yourself in this unique world. Far from a typical fantasy setting, the *Shining* world is populated with interesting races and memorable characters. For example, rather than knights on horseback, you get the half-human, half-horse centaurs. A change that's so much more interesting, it's baffling why other RPGs never copied it. Likewise, where *Fire Emblem* gives you pretty good flying units in the form of knights mounted on Pegasus steeds, *Shining Force* has birdmen – feathered sword fighters who can fly across the battlefield in a couple of turns. Instead of standard warriors, you get Wolflings, who excitingly dash forward to attack with a swipe of their claws and a piercing howl.

This focus on character makes perfect sense for the genre. Since you'll be taking a large squad into battle, you'll naturally want a range of characters with complementary attack styles and movement methods and a way to easily identify them. But it's even more fun to assemble your team when there are such interesting and varied races available. By the time you have more members in your force than you can possibly take into battle, it's testament to just how good the character design is that you'll find it agonising to decide who comes along for the fight and who must be left behind. ▶

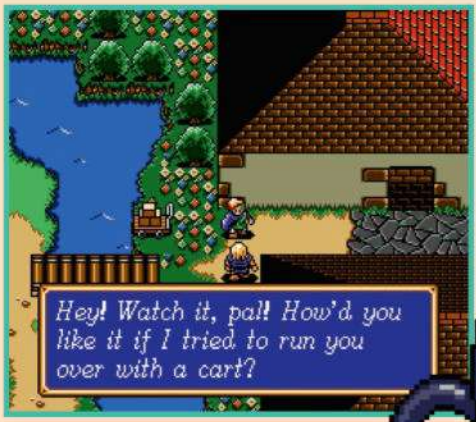
"THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE NEW AND INTERESTING TO RECRUIT"



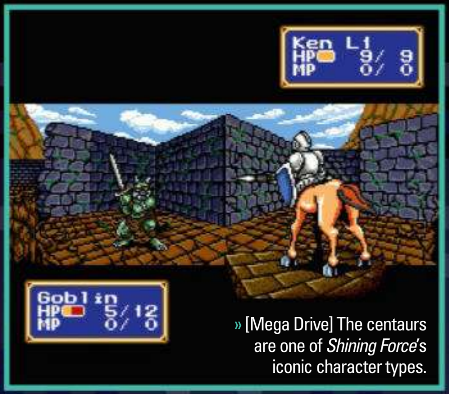
Hey there, youngster. My name is Gort. Care to hear my story?

» [Mega Drive] It's well worth exploring every town in full so you don't miss any secret weapons, useful items or even entirely new characters.

» [Mega Drive] *Shining Force* is packed full of little moments that are just for fun.

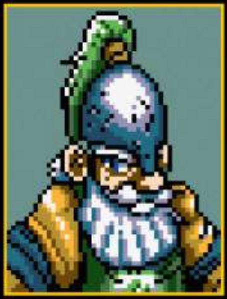


Hey! Watch it, pal! How'd you like it if I tried to run you over with a cart?



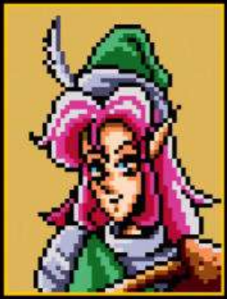
» [Mega Drive] The centaurs are one of *Shining Force*'s iconic character types.

Land Effect 0%
Balbaroy L11
HP 18/18
MP 0/ 0



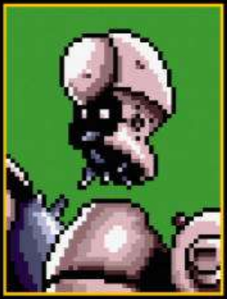
GORT

■ An axe-wielding dwarf you meet in the pub. He's too drunk to join you when you first meet but if you're persistent he'll eventually join.



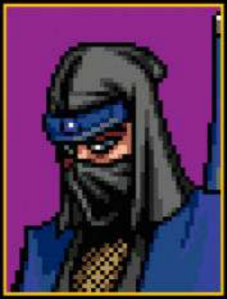
DIANE

■ Promote Diane and she'll trade in her bow for a giant crossbow. She's the sister of Tao, as well as Wendy from *Shining Force Gaiden*.



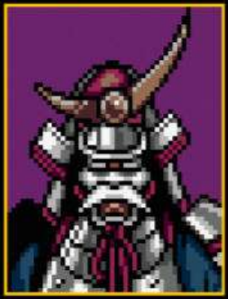
ADAM

■ Max's loyal robotic companion. After promotion, he has a random chance to fire a laser from his hand when attacking.



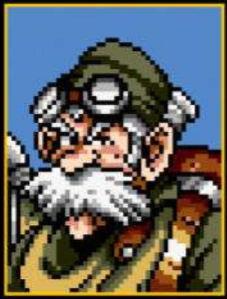
HANZOU

■ A ninja from Far East Village, a location you'll eventually visit in *Shining The Holy Ark*. Hanzou also appears in *Shining Force Gaiden II*.



MUSASHI

■ If you find a note from Musashi on a wall and read it, this old samurai warrior will appear in your HQ and join the team.

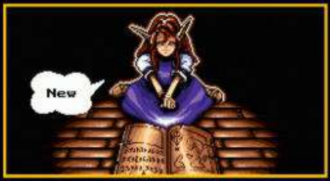


KOKICHI

■ An old inventor who builds a wing suit to help him fly about the place. After promotion he upgrades the suit to a gyrocopter.

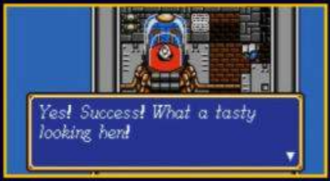
THE SHINY DOZEN

TWELVE HIGHLIGHTS FROM MAX'S ADVENTURE



STORY TIME

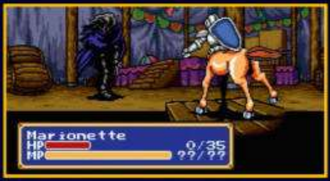
Before you begin your quest, the story is framed by this elf reading a book. It's a series tradition for *Shining* games to be bookended by a storyteller.



Yes! Success! What a tasty looking hen!

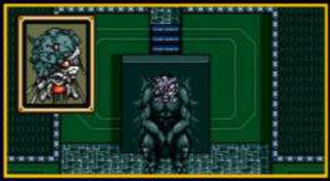
FEELING CHICKEN?

At one point Max meets an inventor and agrees to step into his experimental machine. Turning into a chicken beats turning into a fly at least!



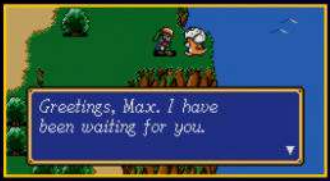
BIG-TOP BATTLE

While most of the battles take place in the fields or deep underground, some are more imaginative, like this battle that plays out inside a huge circus tent.



BIG BAD BOSS

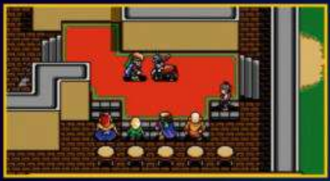
One of the most impressive bosses in the game is the Colossus, a giant demonic statue who grows three heads that independently float around and attack.



Greetings, Max. I have been waiting for you.

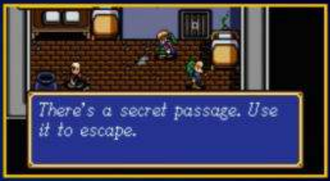
MEET JOGURT

Max's first encounter with Jogurt, one of the all-time great RPG mascots. He might not be that useful, but you'll still enjoy your time with him.



RECAP TIME

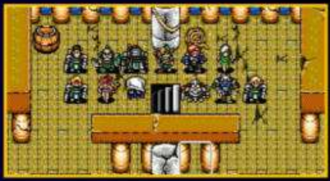
In the town of Rindo you can watch a stage play that retells the story of your adventure so far. Max even gets to go backstage and meet the actor who plays him.



There's a secret passage. Use it to escape.

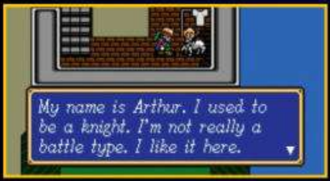
PRISON BREAK

The prison sequence, in which Khris helps you escape the cell via a secret passage, is one of the most dramatic parts of the story.



SEA BATTLE

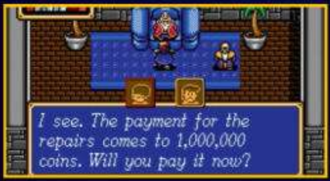
Eventually you'll be able to travel to other lands on a huge ship, and even fight a battle aboard it, out at sea. Ship battles would become a *Shining* series staple.



My name is Arthur. I used to be a knight. I'm not really a battle type. I like it here.

LAUNDRY SKILLS

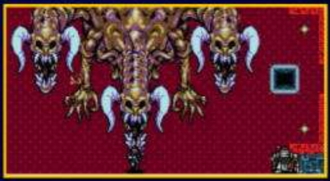
When you recruit Arthur, he seems to be hanging out his laundry. In *Shining Force III* you also meet and recruit a centaur called Arthur and he's hanging out laundry too!



I see. The payment for the repairs comes to 1,000,000 coins. Will you pay it now?

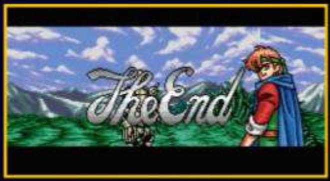
FUNNY, HOW?

The King of Guardiana likes a good laugh. Here he asks an exorbitant price to repair your ship, knowing you can't actually afford it. He's a funny guy…



BIG AND UGLY

Dark Dragon is the final boss of the game and a grotesquely impressive sight. His disgusting body takes up almost the entire screen and he's very tricky to defeat.



POST CREDITS

Max seemingly dies defeating Dark Dragon but, like a Marvel movie on your Mega Drive, there's a post-credits scene that reveals both he and Adam are still very much alive.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

THE SHINING SEQUELS AND SPIN-OFFS FEATURING CHARACTERS FROM THE FIRST SHINING FORCE

SHINING FORCE GAIDEN

Though *Shining Force II* took place in an entirely new world, this Game Gear sequel follows years after the first game. Some characters return as NPCs and Princess Anri is now the queen.

SHINING FORCE: THE SWORD OF HAJYA

Is everyone in their assigned positions.

The sequel to *Shining Force Gaiden* features playable cameos from both Hanzou and Musashi, though both their names are mistranslated. Both this and *Shining Force Gaiden* were remade and expanded in *Shining Force CD*.

SHINING FORCE: FINAL CONFLICT

The third and final entry in Game Gear's *Gaiden* series is a special crossover sequel to both *Shining Force* and *Shining Force II*. Max makes a return as a playable character while certain boss villains also appear.

SHINING FORCE III PREMIUM DISC

While the *Shining Force III* games are set in a totally new world to previous entries, this bonus fan disc contained extra battles against some classic villains recreated in 3D, including the first game's final boss, Dark Dragon.

TIME STALKERS

This Dreamcast roguelike RPG, also called *Climax Landers* in Japan, is a crossover game featuring characters from previous *Climax* games, including Nigel from *Landstalker* and Pyra from *Shining In The Darkness*. *Shining Force*'s Jogurt makes a cameo and even has his own downloadable VMU game.

SHINING SOUL

The first *Shining* game not to be made by the original devs is a non-canon action RPG with cameos from across the series. Adam appears as an ally, and Dark Dragon once again returns.

SHINING SOUL II

This superior sequel has fewer direct connections to previous games but Jogurt does make a cameo appearance as a special soul attack summon.

SHINING FORCE: RESURRECTION OF THE DARK DRAGON

A complete remake of *Shining Force* for GBA, with brand-new graphics and additional chapters featuring new character Zuika, an insect-like ninja who attacks using collectible cards.

SHINING FORCE: HEROES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

This mobile game was announced in 2021 and was set to revive the classic tactical gameplay for the first time in years. It aimed to unite multiple heroes from the series' past, but was sadly cancelled in 2022.

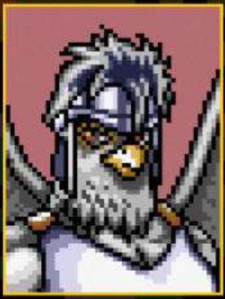
> "PERHAPS WITH THE GENRE GROWING EVER MORE POPULAR, SHINING FORCE CAN ONE DAY RETURN TO ITS STRATEGIC ROOTS"

Land Effect
0%
Lowe L9
HP 29/29
MP 36/36
STAY

Max discovers a Domingo Egg!

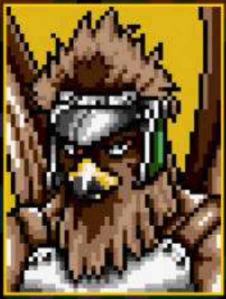
THE SHINING FORCE

MEET THE TEAM



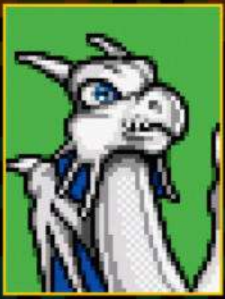
AMON

■ The first bird knight you meet, Amon asks you to help rescue her husband Balbaroy, who also joins the force.



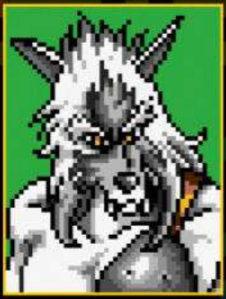
BALBAROY

■ A birdman turned to stone by Darksol. Max helps Amon lift the curse and recruits both into the force.



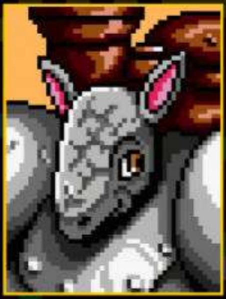
BLEU

■ A baby dragon and the last of his kind, Bleu can be promoted to an exceptionally strong Great Dragon.



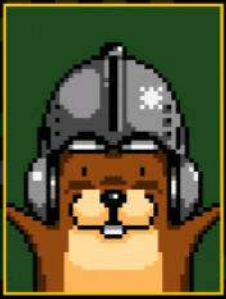
ZYLO

■ An optional Wolfling warrior with devastating claw attacks. The coolest character in the game.



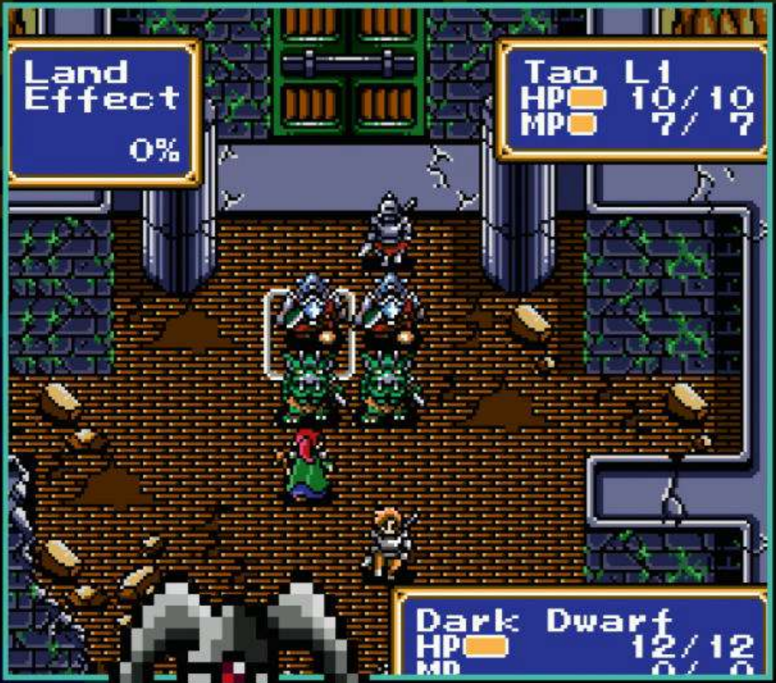
GUNTZ

■ A unique character among the whole series, Guntz is an armadillo with a steam-powered suit of armour.

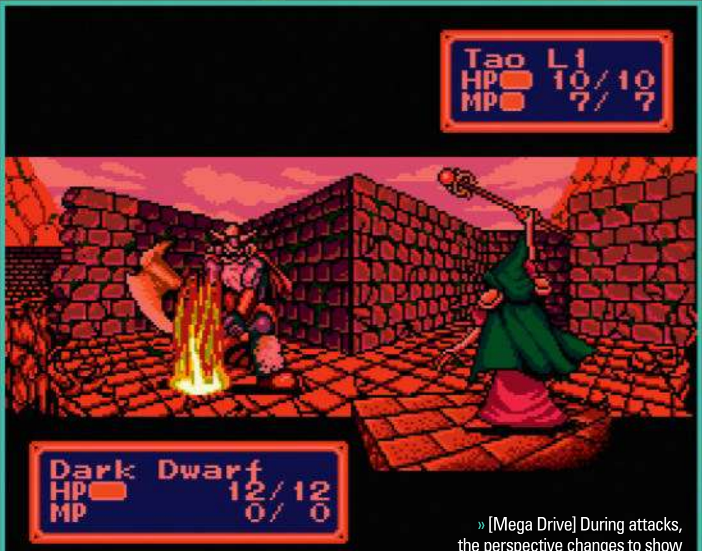


JOGURT

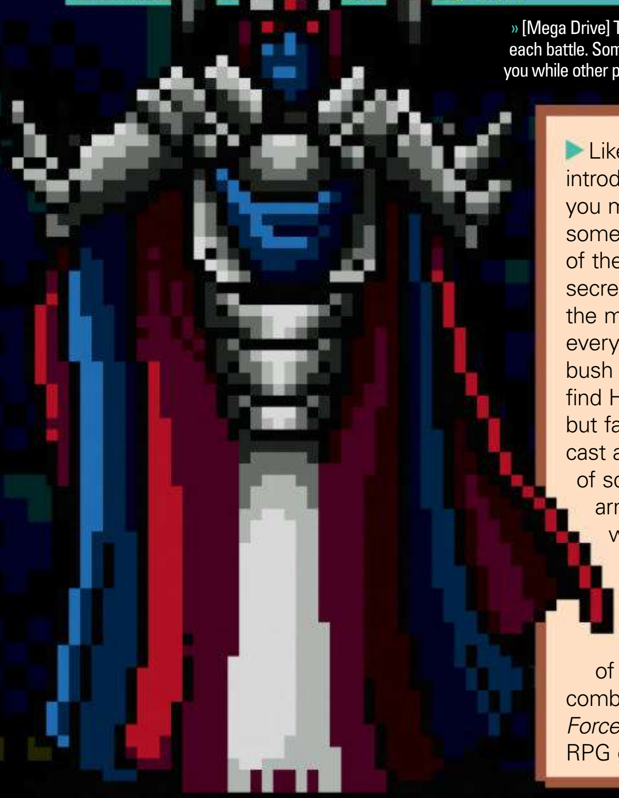
■ Became something of a mascot for the early *Shining* games. He's not very useful in battle but he's fun to have around.



» [Mega Drive] Terrain plays an important role in each battle. Some will slow you down or protect you while other parts are completely impassable.



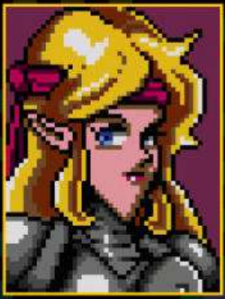
» [Mega Drive] During attacks, the perspective changes to show excellent character animations and sumptuous backgrounds.



Like other games in the genre, *Shining Force* introduces new characters at a steady pace as you move through the story, so there's always someone new and interesting to recruit. Some of the best and most unusual of these are the secret characters, who can only be found by the most curious players, prepared to explore every inch of each town. Investigate that odd bush in the final chapter, for example, and you'll find Hanzou the ninja in there. A great character but far from the most unusual… *Shining Force*'s cast also includes a robot, a baby dragon, a sort of squid thing you can hatch from an egg, an armadillo with steam-powered armour and, weirdest of all, the bizarrely named Jogurt; a gerbil-like creature that isn't much use in battle but who's so cute you won't want to be without him.

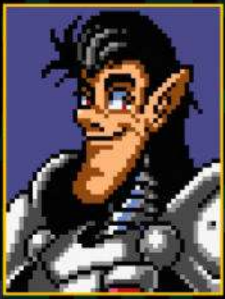
Over 30 years later, this potent mix of colourful characters, satisfying tactical combat and RPG exploration makes *Shining Force* a standout entry in the crowded strategy RPG genre. Which makes it all the more baffling that the series has petered out over the decades. The Takahashi brothers created a string of excellent sequels and spin-offs throughout the Nineties, culminating in the Saturn's three-part epic, *Shining Force III*. But soon after they parted ways with Sega which has since ditched the tactical gameplay in favour of generic anime action.

Perhaps with the genre growing ever more popular, *Shining Force* can one day return to its strategic roots. Until then, at least the original game is widely available to enjoy. You'll find it on every major platform as part of the *Sega Mega Drive Classics Collection*, it's included in the higher tier of the Nintendo Switch Online subscription, takes pride of place on the Mega Drive Mini and is free to play on mobile and purchasable on Steam. So if you're a fan of tactics games, there's no excuse not to check out one of the finest examples from the genre's early years.



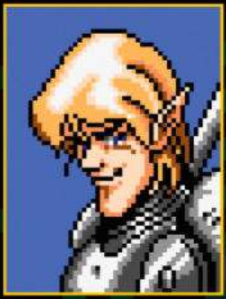
MAE

The only female centaur in the game. Mae starts out as a Knight and can be promoted to Paladin.



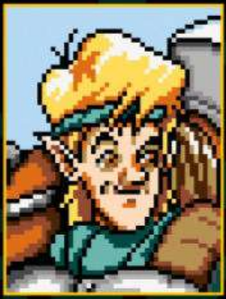
PELLE

A mercenary centaur who joins the force. Has a remarkably long chin and is favoured by speedrunners.



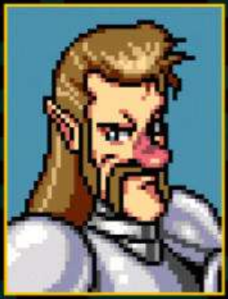
ARTHUR

Arthur is a common name in the *Shining* world, including the hero of *Shining The Holy Ark*.



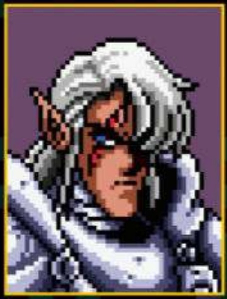
LYLE

Unlike other centaurs, Lyle isn't armed with a spear or lance. He prefers a giant rocket launcher.



VANKAR

An optional centaur knight found late in the game. A heavy hitter but prone to seasickness.



EARNEST

Max rescues this centaur from prison. He can throw a spear as a ranged weapon and has a cool scar over his eye.

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come

retro GAMER
DICEY DUNGEONS
ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBORS
THE MAKING OF NARC
MASTER SYSTEM GEMS TO COLLECT
ASTRO CITY MINI HANDS-ON

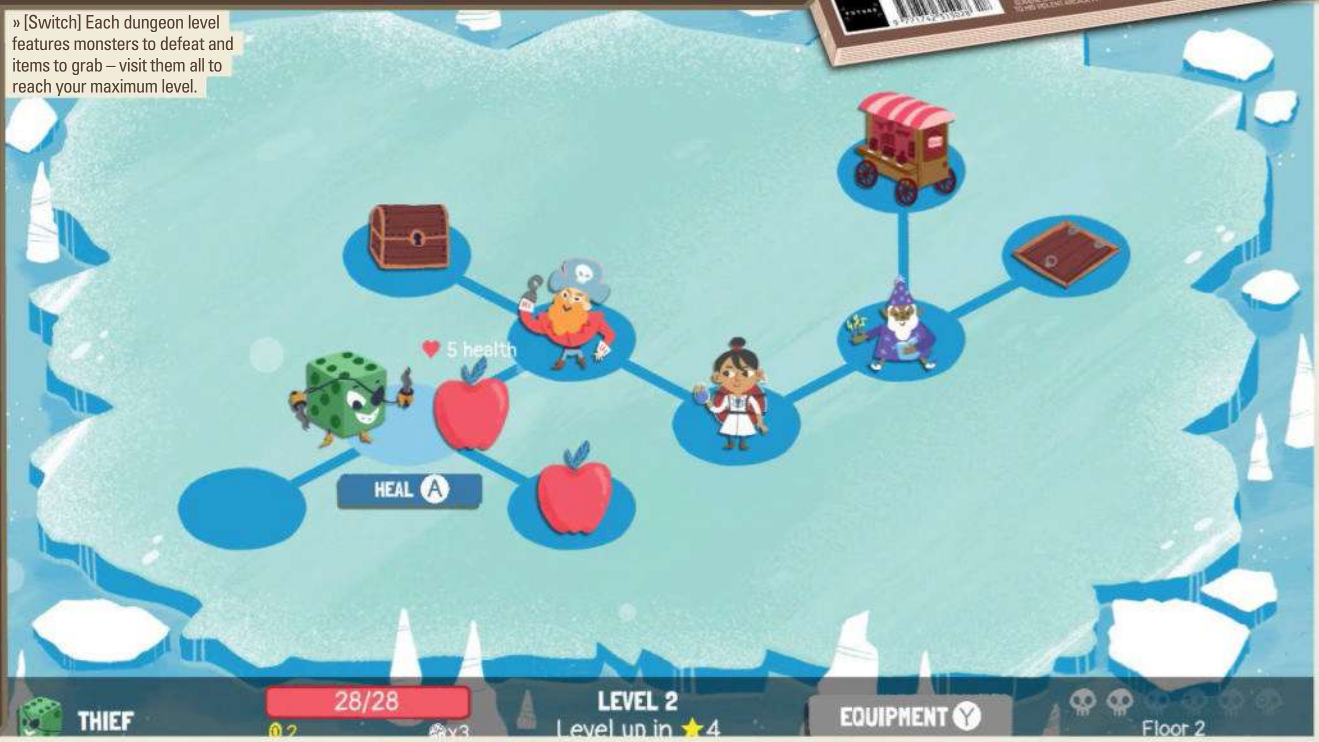
Info

- **» System:** PC, Linux, Mac, Switch, Xbox One, Xbox Series S/X, iOS, Android
- **» Year:** 2019
- **» Publisher:** Terry Cavanagh, Super Rare Games
- **» Developer:** Terry Cavanagh
- **» Key People:** Terry Cavanagh, Marlowe Dobbe, Chipzel, Holly Gramazio

Go Deeper

» If you prefer portable play and don't own a Switch you'll find that *Dicey Dungeons* is supported on iOS and Android devices.

» *Dicey Dungeons* is extremely popular on Itch.io with a number of mods available for the core game (available there for £14.99).



» [Switch] Each dungeon level features monsters to defeat and items to grab – visit them all to reach your maximum level.

After wowing gamers with Super Hexagon and VVVVVV, Terry Cavanagh tried his hand at a deck-building game. The end result is one of the best examples of the genre and proves you don't need a big budget, just big ideas

Words by Darran Jones

DICEY DUNGEONS

THE BACKGROUND

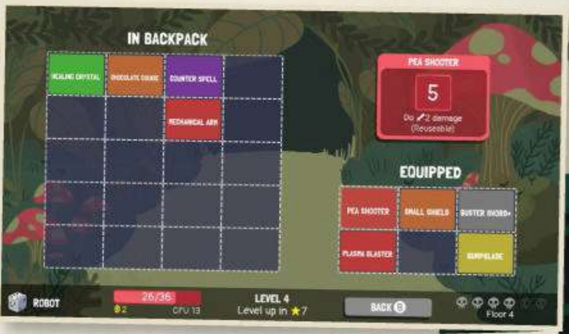
With deck-building games being so popular in the board-game community it was perhaps inevitable that the formula would be used by inventive videogame developers. While a large number of great examples now exist, including *Slay The Spire* and *Monster Train*, one of the very best is Terry Cavanagh's excellent *Dicey Dungeons*.

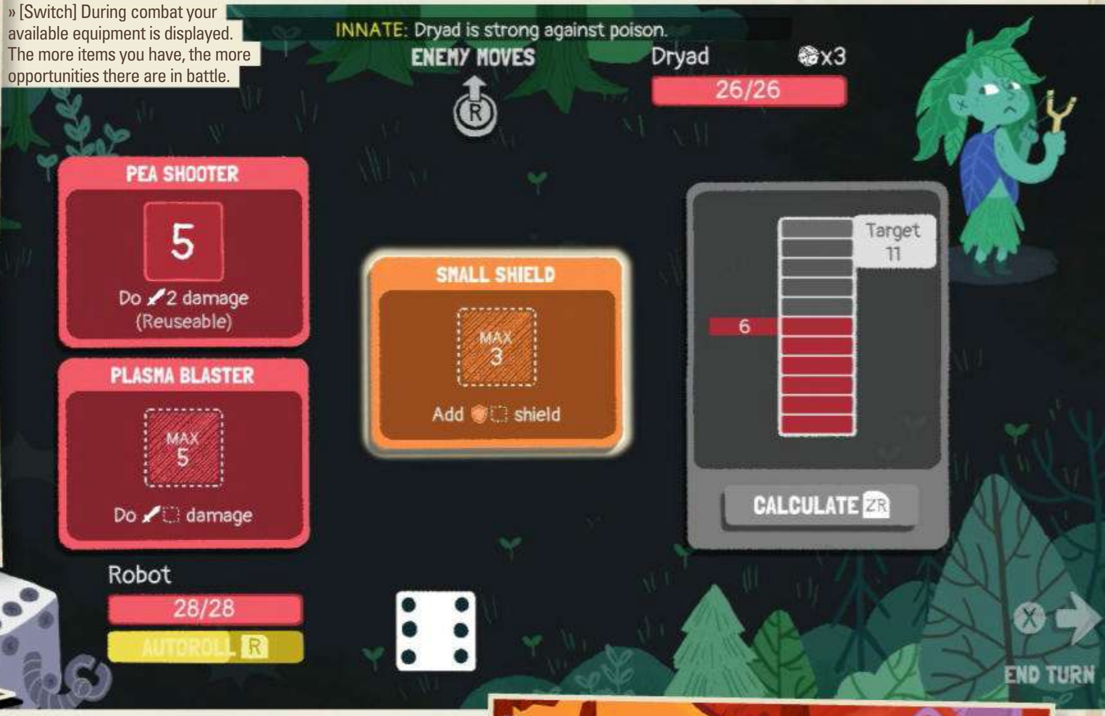
If that name seems familiar to you it's because Terry has been behind two darling indie hits, the rhythm game *Super Hexagon* and the gravity-bending platformer *VVVVVV*, as well as countless smaller projects. Working predominantly in Adobe Flash and Microsoft Windows, his games are best known for their minimalist art style that may make them rather basic but means that their gameplay immediately rises to the surface like a particularly delicious dollop of cream on an already calorie-laden coffee.

Outside of two *Roblox* projects and an incoming game called *State Machine*, *Dicey Dungeons* is Terry's most-recently released game and marked his third commercial title. Inspired by Peter Whalen's *Dream Quest*, *Dicey Dungeons* was first announced in 2018 alongside a playable demo that Terry had been working on for roughly three months. With a little more polish needed for a commercial release Terry soon enlisted the help of Marlowe Dobbe who created *Dicey Dungeons*' distinctive-looking graphical style, while music was supplied by Chipzel who had already worked with Terry on *Super Hexagon*. Holly Gramazio wrote *Dicey Dungeons*' entertaining story, while Justo Delgado Baudi was on programming duties for the game.

THE GAME

Being a roguelike, the main brilliance of *Dicey Dungeons* is that no two games are ever the same. Set against the backdrop of a bizarre game show where contestants are turned into dice, players are challenged by Lady Luck to tackle her fiendishly designed dungeons and claim both their freedom and human forms again. Initially you'll




» [Switch] During combat your available equipment is displayed. The more items you have, the more opportunities there are in battle.

LADY LUCK
You.

» [Switch] Lady Luck is *Dicey Dungeon*'s game-show antagonist and always has a barbed quip for you.

Things of note

A PHYSICAL QUEST

DICEY DUNGEONS
Super Rare

If you don't like digital, Super Rare Games (which sent us our review copy) still has physical copies of *Dicey Dungeons* for sale. Get it at superraregames.com

GOLD DIGGER

Defeat every enemy you can. You'll earn more gold this way which is essential as shops get more expensive as you delve deeper into each dungeon.

NEW CHALLENGES

There are six Episodes for each class and some of them are incredibly tough to complete. Newbies will definitely want to pick the Warrior as they learn *Dicey Dungeon*'s mechanics.

A DICEY REVISION

If you're looking for further challenges try out *Dicey Dungeons Reunion* which greatly changes the mechanics of the game, swapping out dice for coins and other tricks.

MASTER OF UNLOCKING

YOU'VE UNLOCKED
THE JESTER!

Dicey Dungeons continually awards you with unlockable content, including characters and Episodes. The Jester for example is the last hero you gain access to.

only have access to the Warrior but as you go through more runs you'll unlock additional classes like the Inventor and Witch, all of which have their own unique abilities, meaning the game caters to a number of different play styles. Each character also has a large number of Episodes to unlock with each adding a different spin to the core rules – one might grant all enemies 10% extra health and upgraded equipment, while another might cause the Witch to deal with a randomly generated spell each turn.

Once you've chosen a character you'll navigate through a series of dungeon levels with the aim of defeating its boss. Each dungeon level is populated with all manner of useful items and hazards, from enemy monsters and shops, to upgrade stations, health items and treasure chests. Your character starts with a small number of dice and an equipment card and you can gain additional dice by levelling up, while new equipment can be found in shops or treasure chests.

Dicey Dungeons features turn-based combat and it's extremely fast and fluid to play. At a turn's start your dice are rolled and you'll be able to assign them to spare slots on your equipment cards, many of which need certain requirements to use, from rolling an odd or even number to spending a certain amount of points. Each character class also has a unique Limit Break ability and uses largely different play mechanics, so the Warrior can reroll a certain number of dice, while the Inventor gets to scrap a piece of equipment for a unique gadget after each fight. Once you've completed your actions, play moves over to your opponent. While the core mechanics of *Dicey Dungeons* are relatively simple they become more complex as more characters and Episodes are unlocked. There are numerous buffs and debuffs that can affect play, while equipment cards can also be upgraded, either by granting a more powerful ability or shrinking them in size so you can access more skills.

» [Switch] In addition to direct damage, monsters can cause you various maladies like poison and blindness.

TURN 5
ENEMY MOVES
Kraken
x5
3/44
PEA SHOOTER
5
Jester
x4
1/36
END TURN

As with many roguelikes there's often an element of luck to *Dicey Dungeons* as some runs will give you access to better equipment than others, but the varied structure of its gameplay and the large number of different equipment cards means the odds aren't always unfairly stacked against you as they can be in some examples of the genre. Adding further to *Dicey Dungeons*' breezy charm is the sharp banter of its antagonist and Chipzel's excellent music, which is as moreish as the game's 'just one more go then' runs.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

It may not reinvent the genre, but *Dicey Dungeons* is a truly tremendous strategy game that evolves along with your playing style. The six main characters come with their own unique strategies to suit any style of play, while the seemingly basic rule structure becomes more complex the longer you play. Packed with content (our Switch version comes with two additional level packs) and some excellent aesthetics, *Dicey Dungeons* proves that you don't need cutting-edge visuals or gigantic budgets to create a genuinely satisfying game experience. *

THE MAKING OF

THE RUMBLE FISH 1+2

THE RUMBLE FISH MIGHT BE AN ODD NAME, BUT THE FIGHTING GAMES THAT BEAR IT ARE AN INTERESTING EVOLUTIONARY LINK BETWEEN FAR MORE FAMOUS FRANCHISES. WE SPEAK TO DIMPS TO FIND OUT WHY THESE FIGHTING GAMES ARE MORE SMOKED SALMON THAN CODSWALLOP

WORDS BY NICK THORPE

©Sammy/©Dimps Corporation 2004

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IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** SAMMY, SEGA

» **DEVELOPER:** DIMPS

» **RELEASED:** 2004, 2005

» **PLATFORM:** ARCADE, PS2

» **GENRE:** FIGHTING

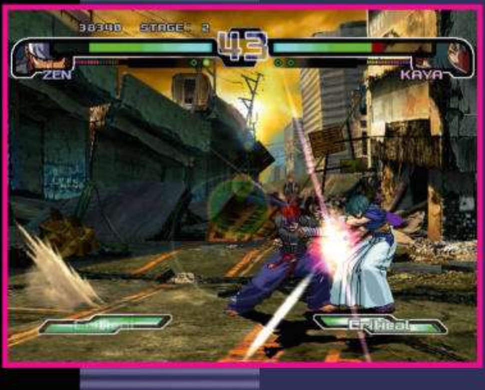
We like to think that Retro Gamer readers are pretty clued up on games, but despite that we'd also be willing to wager that quite a few of you have never heard of *The Rumble Fish*. Unfortunately the local bookies gave us a confused look when we tried to place that bet, so our willing will never amount to winnings, but the games really should be on your radar because they've got quite the pedigree. Dimps, the developer that created the games, probably doesn't ring any bells either – but the games it has worked on will.

Dimps was founded in 2000 and quickly earned a reputation as a dependable developer for hire, thanks to early projects such as *Sonic Advance* and *Dragon Ball Z: Budokai*. However, these kinds of projects weren't what the staff were used to. "The core team were at SNK before Dimps," says Hiroyuki Kawano, executive producer of The *Rumble Fish* games. "Some team members were on the console-focussed team, but, a large percentage were on the arcade side. So, when we started to make games for consoles, a lot of people were starting from the ground up." Those developers had worked on games including *The King Of Fighters* and *Fatal Fury* series, so they were well-versed in computerised combat.

"We really wanted to try something new, especially as we now weren't tied to a specific platform. Back then, things were all done according to the manufacturer, or in the case of arcades by boards," explains Kawano. The board that the ex-SNK staff had previously been required to use was the Neo Geo MVS, which was still popular but decidedly dated by the time Dimps was formed. "At Dimps, we didn't want to be tied to a particular platform while trying out different things and various forms of digital expression. Of course, one of the arcade boards that we talked about was the Atomiswave." The Atomiswave was a new low-cost arcade board from Sammy, which essentially had identical specs to Sega's Dreamcast.

Although the Dimps team had returned to the comfort zone of arcade development, it didn't start off with a one-on-one fighting game, instead leading with the traditional scrolling beat-'em-up *Demolishfist* in 2003. The team also worked on the football game *Premier Eleven*, which made it to location tests but ultimately didn't see a wide release. "At the time, we had been involved in the development of a game on Atomiswave that had been delayed. So the team had gained knowledge about Atomiswave during this project," says main game programmer Yoshiyuki Tanaka. "As this was the time that *The Rumble Fish* project was getting off the ground, it made sense to utilise all the skills we had with this technology to produce the game."

With the power of the Atomiswave at its disposal, Dimps could afford to design the sprites for the high-resolution 640x480 display, as well as incorporating 3D backgrounds. It also came up with a unique visual style for the game. "Right



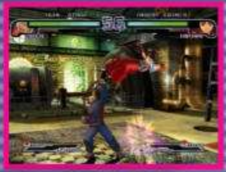
» [Arcade] The natural disaster mentioned in the plot isn't often evident, but this stage shows it.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

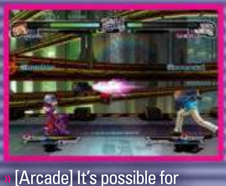
SONIC RUSH
SYSTEM: DS
YEAR: 2005

STREET FIGHTER IV (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE, VARIOUS
YEAR: 2008

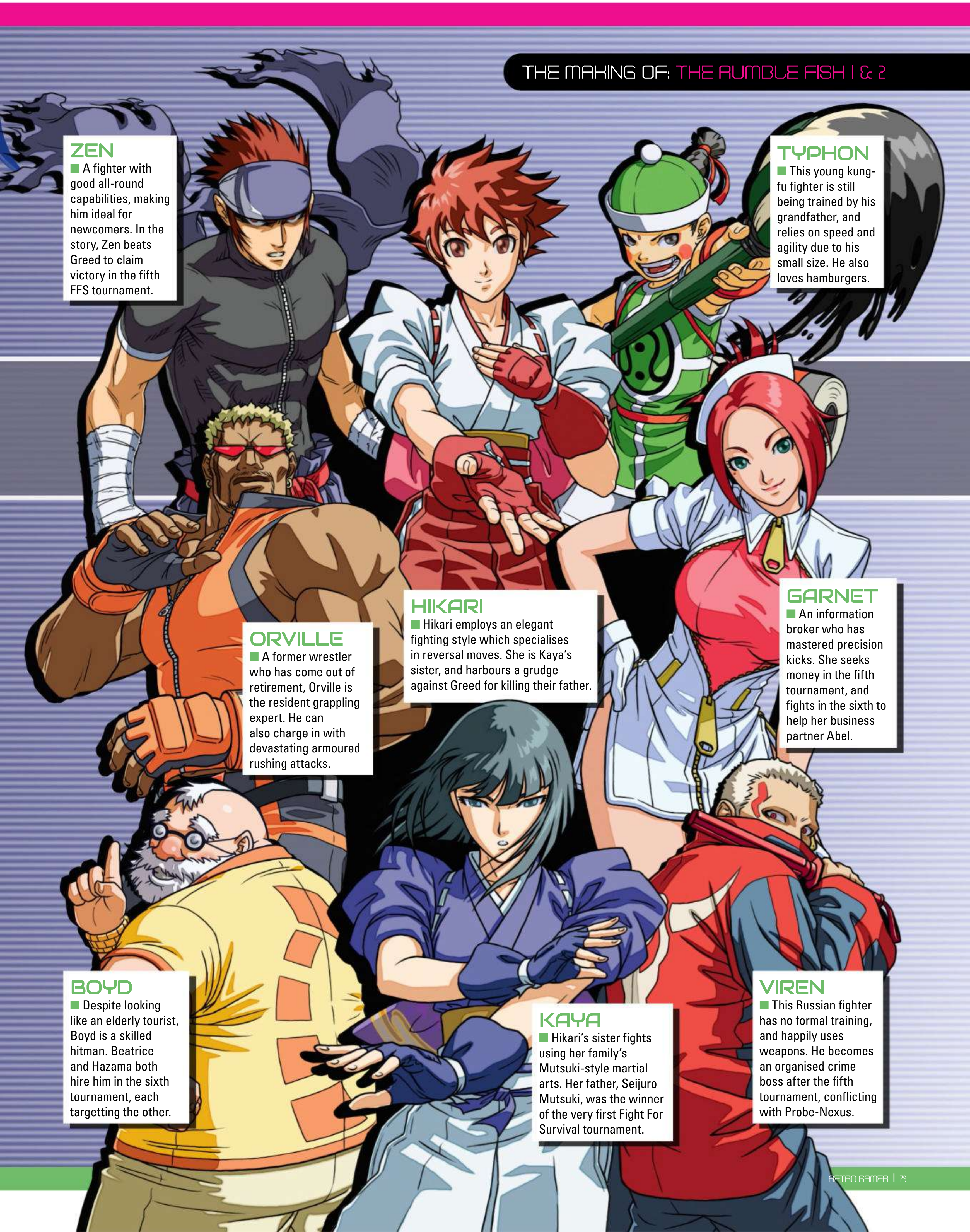
SOULCALIBUR VI
SYSTEM: PS4, XBOX ONE, PC
YEAR: 2018



» [Arcade] Viren's attacks look particularly vicious, as he flings his opponents about with a chain.



» [Arcade] It's possible for a strong attack to rebound your opponent off the side of the screen..



ZEN

A fighter with good all-round capabilities, making him ideal for newcomers. In the story, Zen beats Greed to claim victory in the fifth FFS tournament.

TYPHON

This young kung-fu fighter is still being trained by his grandfather, and relies on speed and agility due to his small size. He also loves hamburgers.

HIKARI

Hikari employs an elegant fighting style which specialises in reversal moves. She is Kaya's sister, and harbours a grudge against Greed for killing their father.

ORVILLE

A former wrestler who has come out of retirement, Orville is the resident grappling expert. He can also charge in with devastating armoured rushing attacks.

GARNET

An information broker who has mastered precision kicks. She seeks money in the fifth tournament, and fights in the sixth to help her business partner Abel.

BOYD

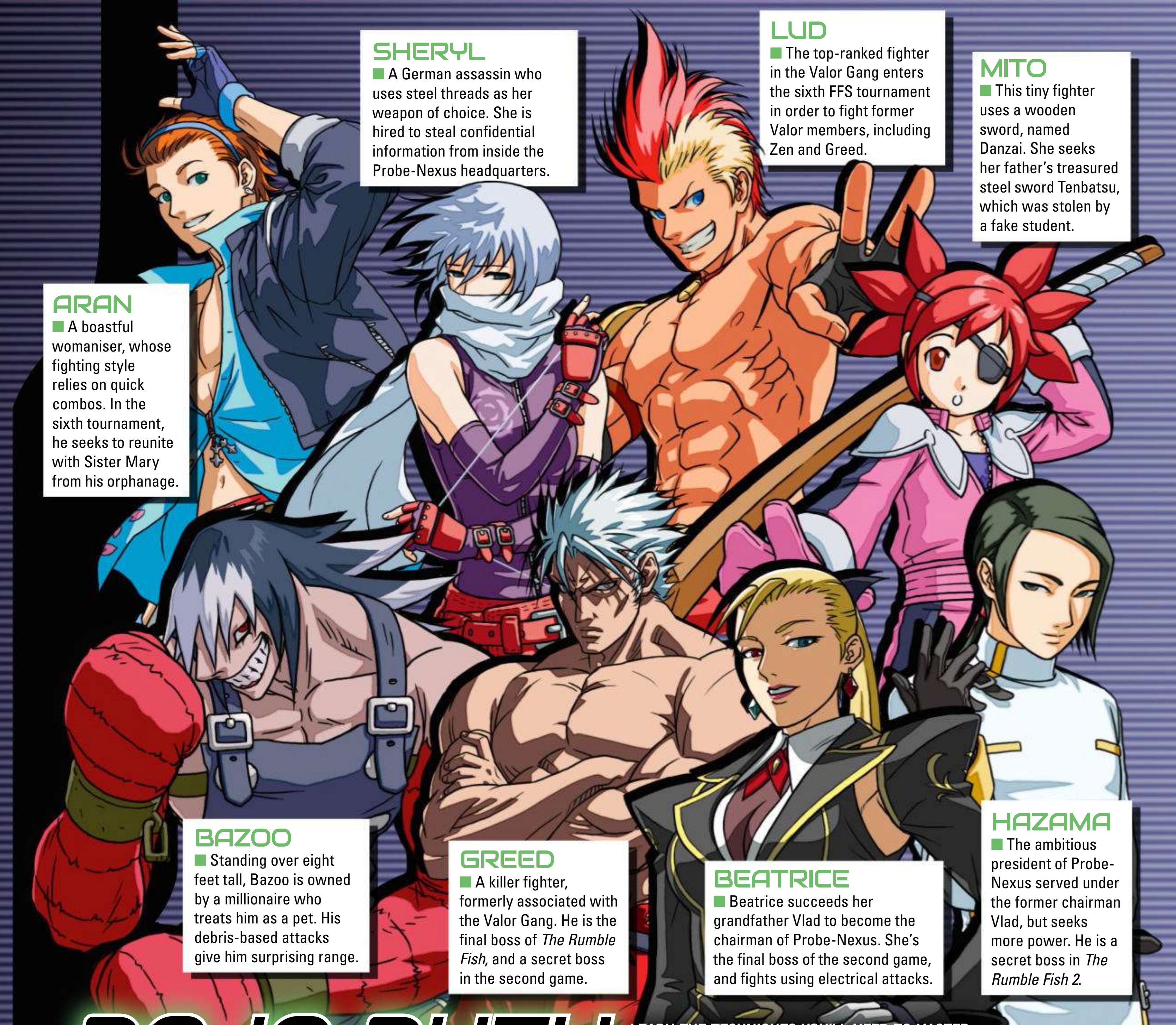
Despite looking like an elderly tourist, Boyd is a skilled hitman. Beatrice and Hazama both hire him in the sixth tournament, each targetting the other.

KAYA

Hikari's sister fights using her family's Mutsuki-style martial arts. Her father, Seijuro Mutsuki, was the winner of the very first Fight For Survival tournament.

VIREN

This Russian fighter has no formal training, and happily uses weapons. He becomes an organised crime boss after the fifth tournament, conflicting with Probe-Nexus.



ARAN

A boastful womaniser, whose fighting style relies on quick combos. In the sixth tournament, he seeks to reunite with Sister Mary from his orphanage.

SHERYL

A German assassin who uses steel threads as her weapon of choice. She is hired to steal confidential information from inside the Probe-Nexus headquarters.

LUD

The top-ranked fighter in the Valor Gang enters the sixth FFS tournament in order to fight former Valor members, including Zen and Greed.

MITO

This tiny fighter uses a wooden sword, named Danzai. She seeks her father's treasured steel sword Tenbatsu, which was stolen by a fake student.

BAZOO

Standing over eight feet tall, Bazoo is owned by a millionaire who treats him as a pet. His debris-based attacks give him surprising range.

GREED

A killer fighter, formerly associated with the Valor Gang. He is the final boss of *The Rumble Fish*, and a secret boss in the second game.

BEATRICE

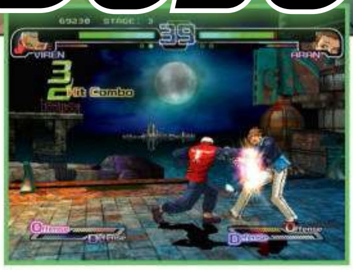
Beatrice succeeds her grandfather Vlad to become the chairman of Probe-Nexus. She's the final boss of the second game, and fights using electrical attacks.

HAZAMA

The ambitious president of Probe-Nexus served under the former chairman Vlad, but seeks more power. He is a secret boss in *The Rumble Fish 2*.

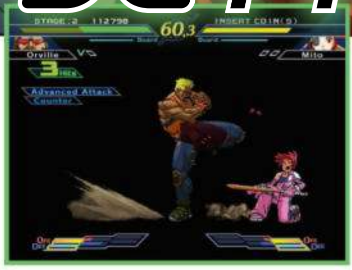
DOJO DUTY

LEARN THE TECHNIQUES YOU'LL NEED TO MASTER FOR SUCCESS IN THE FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL



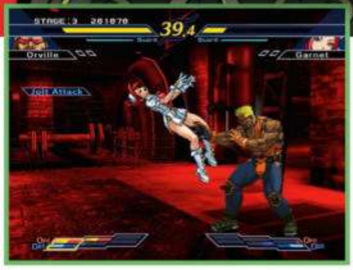
RUSH COMBO

Easy chain combos, as seen in *Darkstalkers* and *Guilty Gear*. Normal light attacks can combo into light attacks and heavy attacks, heavy attacks can only combo into other heavy attacks.



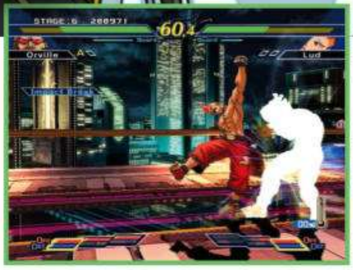
ADVANCED ATTACK

By pressing heavy punch and heavy kick together, you can spend one segment of your offensive gauge to extend a standard combo with further attacks – good for piling on pressure.



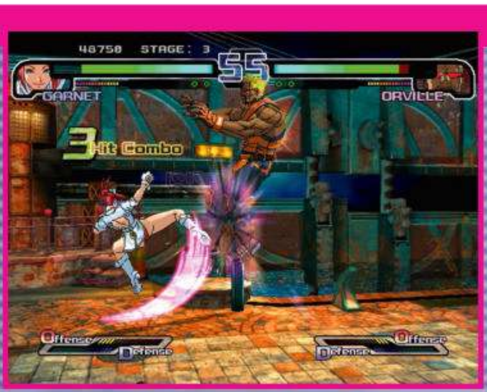
JOLT ATTACK

By pressing light punch and light kick together, you can launch the opponent into the air for a big juggle combo. This also costs one segment of your offensive gauge.

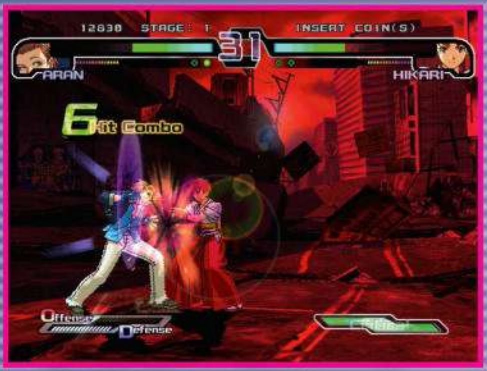


IMPACT BREAK

By pressing the dodge button at the moment you block an opponent's attack, you can spend a segment of defensive gauge to recover more quickly, reducing your opponent's frame advantage.

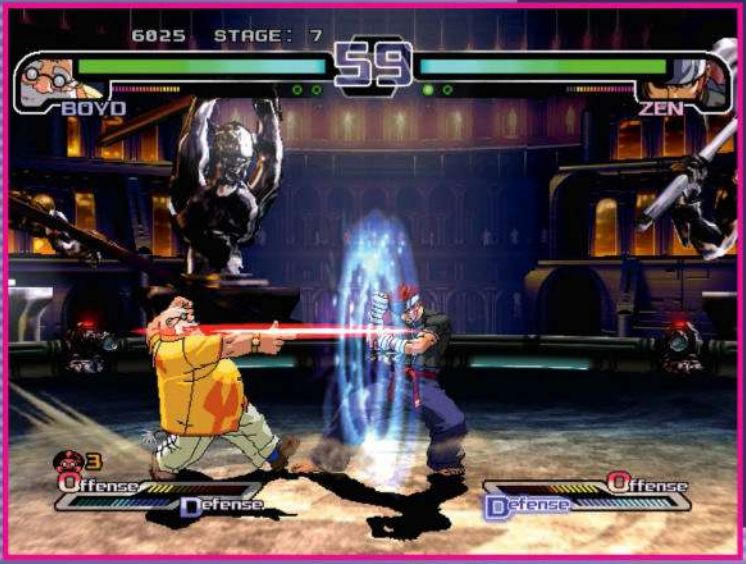


» [Arcade] Juggle combos are a key component of the fighting model in *The Rumble Fish*.



» [Arcade] In the first game, Jolt Attacks momentarily stun opponents, opening them up for combos.

» [Arcade] Finger guns aren't particularly deadly, unless Boyd happens to be the one to draw them.



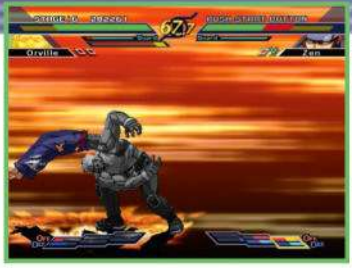
▶ from the start we decided to use SMA for the finely articulated 2D visuals," says Tanaka, referring to the game's signature Smooth Model Animation technique. "Simply put, SMA is a system that creates the connecting motions from one pattern to the next in 2D fighters, says Tanaka. "This has the benefit of connecting patterns via a motion rather than the jittery way it used to be."

The English flyer for *The Rumble Fish* calls this the MJS System, standing for Multi Joint Sprite, and this helps to explain the technical working of the system. Each character is made from a number of different sprites representing various body parts, which can be rotated in addition to using traditional animation frames. *The Rumble Fish* has a look that stands out compared to other 2D fighters as a result, with the fluidity of motion more akin to that of a 3D fighting game at times. However, developing a new animation technology had its drawbacks. "Back then, there weren't any tools for using that in a fighting game, so our team had to make them all from scratch, which as you can imagine, was pretty challenging," explains Tanaka. "This system was a lot of work on the design side as well, so production took a really long time."

The difficulty in implementing the new animation style wasn't the only struggle that the team faced. "I think the thing I struggled with the most was nailing down the character designs. It was pretty time consuming," says Masaharu Oomori, the main game planner. "As this was an original IP, we had to think of fighting styles and designs ourselves that players wouldn't have seen in other fighting games. So it was a really difficult process." Particularly distinctive designs included the diminutive Typhon and the chain-wielding Viren, who Tanaka cites as a favourite character. "He was the first character we implemented with SMA so I ended up using him the most as an SMA character and he really grew on me," he recalls.

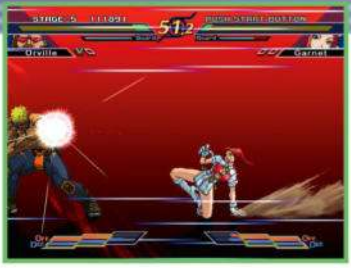
One fighter proved more troublesome than most. "The character of Boyd, in particular, was one we couldn't agree on until the final stages of development. He's a hit man, which is a surprising twist because he doesn't look like one. But in the end we figured out something that worked for everyone," Oomori explains. "I was in charge of Boyd's character, so he's special to me. He has unusual elements in his design as well as his abilities which I nailed down with Tanaka. Boyd also has something the other characters don't in that he builds up his scorpion's attack for one huge hit in the end. I got to implement that accumulative fighting style with him."

Another of the team's key plans relied on SMA, and added to the complexity of each character's design. "The original concept for the game included what's now called the Parts Crush system. We were really keen to show the strength and beauty of fighters who continued to fight even after being hurt or knocked down," Tanaka recalls. "With this in mind, we found the best way to deliver a new experience to the user was when we implemented that on the Atomiswave board and decided to use the SMA system." A Parts Crush occurs when a fighter takes a lot of damage during a fight, and adds a level of visible damage to the fighter, such as lost accessories or torn ▶



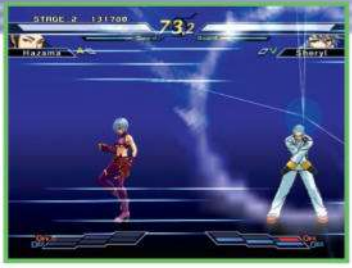
BOOST DIVE

■ Pressing a punch and kick button of different strengths simultaneously grants a temporary power-up that's unique to your character, at the cost of both one offensive and defensive gauge.



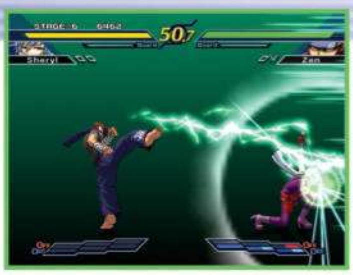
OFFENSIVE ART

■ For one offensive gauge, you can pull off a traditional super move. These are always good for dealing high amounts of damage to finish a round or make a comeback.



DEFENSIVE ART

■ For one defensive gauge, these super moves will get you out of trouble. They might deal damage, but they're often best for knocking opponents back or rapidly shifting position.



CRITICAL ART

■ For all three segments of both of your gauges, you can perform your character's most powerful attack. It's a risky play, but an incredibly flashy way to win a round.

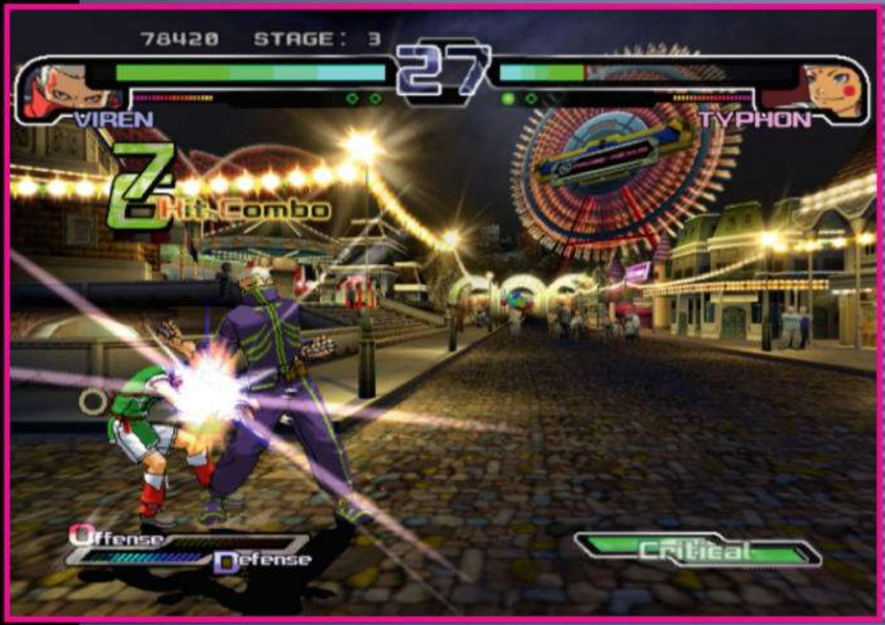
clothing. These effects carry forward to subsequent fights should you win.

All of this detail meant that despite a lengthy development period, *The Rumble Fish* had only nine playable characters and a final boss, so strong core gameplay would be key to winning players over. "One of the game mechanics that was really important to us was that the game had an easy entry level for players," says Tanaka. "A lot of the 2D games at that time such as *Guilty Gear*, lent themselves to offensive play styles. So for *The Rumble Fish*, we decided to build the system to start from offence, with Rush Combos, aerial follow-up attacks etc. We also decided to make mechanics like Impact Breaks that let you counterattack and slow down your opponent."

The most interesting mechanical choice was to split the traditional super gauge into offensive and defensive gauges. "When you only have one gauge in play, if you spend it all on attacking moves you're left vulnerable without any defensive options. Of course that can be fun as you have the trade off and have to make a choice, but we decided we wanted to take a different approach," Tanaka tells us. "This way, players still have ways to block even after exhausting all of their attacks. It gives players the option to do massive damage after using all of their defensive options. We built the mechanics around having more choices, and found it's really fun having it that split."

The Rumble Fish made its arcade debut in the summer of 2004. The plot places the game in an unnamed nation, which was recently devastated by a natural disaster. The shady Probe-Nexus corporation seized the opportunity to rebuild the affected area, creating a giant city known as Zone Prime, but also sponsored an underground fighting tournament known as Fight For Survival in its slums. The game depicts the fifth tournament, with fighters variously battling for the prize money or the chance to settle a score with the final boss, Greed.

An expanded PS2 conversion was released in March 2005. This Japanese exclusive release featured a few notable changes, including an expanded plot with an intro movie and a Story mode, as well as some exclusive new backgrounds. The most exciting addition was the inclusion of two new characters, Sheryl and Hazama, a main character and hidden character respectively. These two can't be played in Arcade mode but are available in other modes, and served as something of a teaser for *The Rumble Fish 2*, which launched in arcades the same month. In an import playtest of the PS2 version, IGN



» [PS2] This fairground is one of the exclusive stages that only appears in the PS2 conversion.

RUMBLE REVIVAL

WHY THE TIME WAS RIGHT FOR THE RUMBLE FISH 2 TO FINALLY HIT CONSOLES

The Rumble Fish 2 was released for home systems late in 2022, marking the first official home release of the game, as well as the first home release for the series as a whole outside of Japan. But why did it take so long for this to happen? "This porting project was a long, on-going discussion between 3goo and Dimps," says Nicolas Di Costanzo of 3goo, the publisher of the modern versions. "*The Rumble Fish* is a Dimps original franchise, and the port or a new project has been in their mind for a long time, but global projects always had priority over porting. Dimps is first of all a developer, not a publisher," he explains. "It really was a case of the timing working out well and we were able to bring our publishing experience to the table with this. We have been working very closely with *The Rumble Fish 2* original team to bring this port to the market."

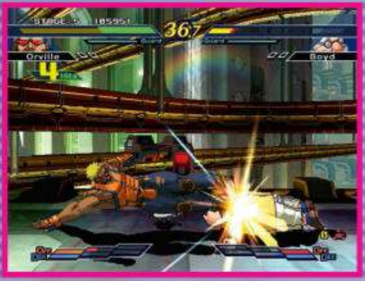
The home version of the game is not a straight port of the arcade game. "Our goal was to provide an enjoyable experience where players could progress and improve their skills at their own paces. So the console and PC versions having the addition of a solid practise mode with proper enemy settings was key," says Nicolas. "A NESiCAxLive version was released in Japanese arcades in 2012, so the online feature was naturally needed. We implemented an online mode with rollback, since it became a must recently," he continues. "A global leaderboard will designate the champion of the moment. We also added a Gallery mode featuring original art designs that users can unlock progressively." Thirteen characters are playable by default, with Greed, Hazama and Beatrice available individually as DLC.

The Rumble Fish 2 is available digitally for PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S, Switch and PC. The North American standard and collector's edition physical releases for PS4, PS5 and Switch by Limited Run Games have sold out, but Japanese standard and collector's edition copies should still be available. European standard copies distributed by Clear River Games are set for release in March 2023.

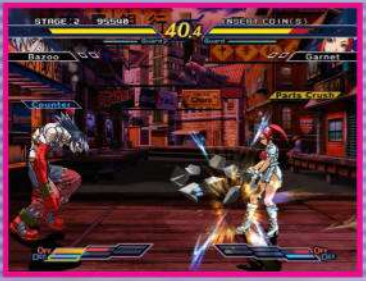
» [PC] Unlike the Atomiswave original, *The Rumble Fish 2* is presented in widescreen on modern platforms.

45.6
Sheryl
Garnet

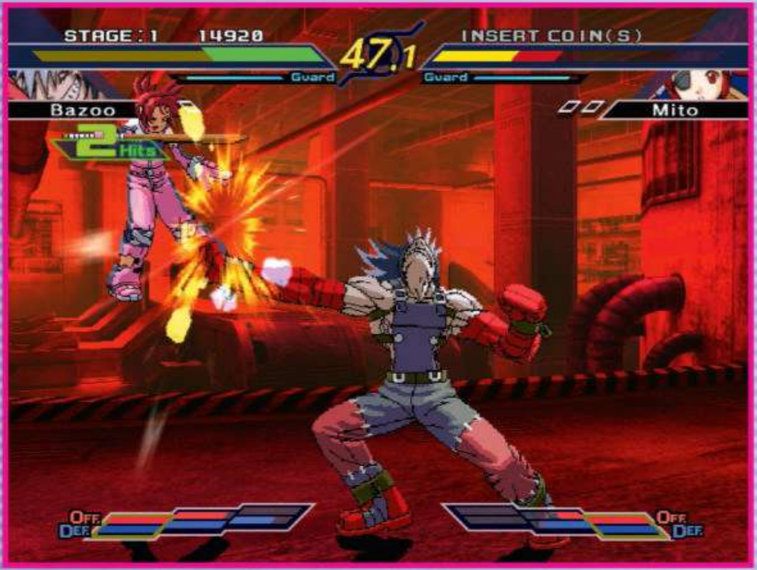
» [PC] Rollback netcode has been included, which will please fans looking to compete with friends online.



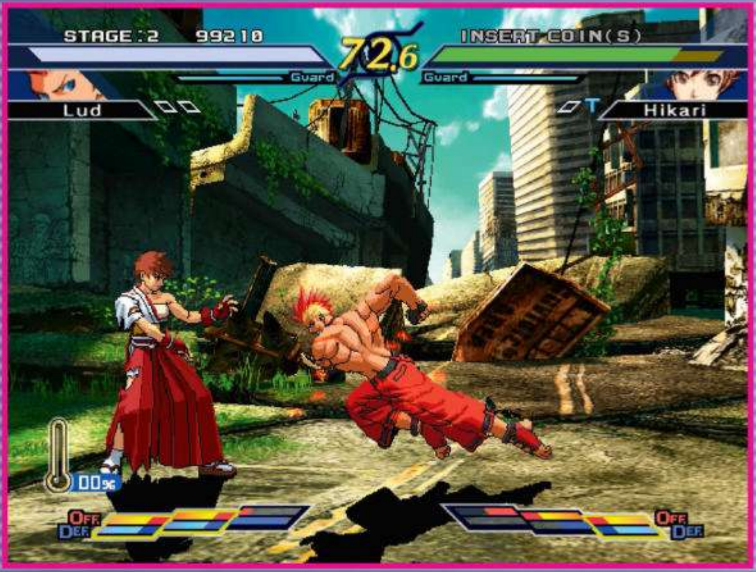
» [Arcade] It's even possible to follow up attacks while fighters are down on the floor.



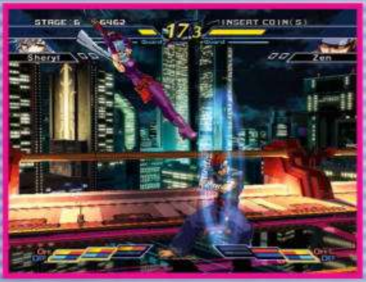
» [Arcade] Garnet has suffered a Parts Crush here, after Bazoo's debris fell on her head.



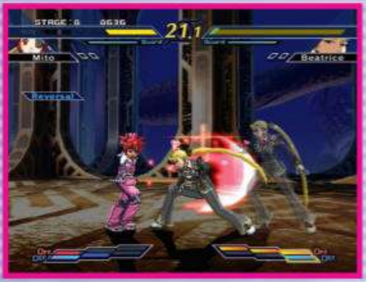
» [Arcade] Bazoo successfully follows up his Jolt Attack with a big anti-air punch.



» [Arcade] Hikari shows off just how badly a character's clothing can be torn by Parts Crush incidents.



» [Arcade] Sheryl can use her steel threads to swing from the top of the stage, should she wish to.



» [Arcade] Beatrice slips past Mito's projectile attack. Yes, she's one of *those* bosses.

criticised the graphical style, claiming to "still prefer games that enslave armies of artists to painfully draw unique frames of animation". However, it felt that "a solid fighting engine" and "characters that feel like they have weight" made for "a game that fans of 2D fighting should love". *Edge* gave the game 6/10, noting that "combos and special moves trip off the controller with ease" and that the split special gauge "is interesting and yet straightforward enough to get", but that the game's "technical plans fail to conjure real passion". In Japan, *Famitsu*'s four reviewers gave it one 8/10 score and three 7/10 scores for a total of 29/40.

Although *The Rumble Fish 2* is named as a sequel, it's really more of an upgrade to the original game – it's pretty easy to tell, as it uses much of the same music and beyond a couple of new backgrounds, primarily uses modified versions of the first game's stages. "We really wanted to give more choice to users, so we implemented more characters and revised the Dual Gauge system to provide more strategic options," says Tanaka. This time, the two gauges were each split into three sections, allowing players more opportunity to use the techniques that relied on them, as well as making Critical Arts much more risky and spectacular. Jolt Attacks were also revised, now launching opponents into the air rather than instantly stunning them.

The most important change by far was the expansion of the character line-up. "*The Rumble Fish* was unfortunately limited to only having ten characters, which wasn't a very big roster and we actually wanted to include a couple more," explains Tanaka. "So we added characters to *The Rumble Fish 2* that we weren't able to add to *The Rumble Fish 1*. These characters had different play styles which would allow more ways to play and create different match-ups." Bazoo, Lud, Mito and Sheryl joined the main cast of characters, Hazama was added as a secret boss character and the new Probe-Nexus chairman Beatrice became the new final boss. The whole original cast returned, with the expected tweaks and additions to their movesets, and Greed was demoted to the role of a secret boss.

Unlike its predecessor, *The Rumble Fish 2* never received a contemporary home release. It did get a second arcade run in 2012 via Taito's NESiCAxLive digital distribution service, and this version formed the basis for the long-awaited home ports released in 2022. It seems crazy that it should have taken so long, but *The Rumble Fish 2* arrived at a tough time for the one-on-one fighting game scene – long after the last aftershocks of the Nineties boom, and a few years before *Street Fighter IV* drove a genre resurgence. But while *The Rumble Fish 2* didn't benefit from that renewed interest in fighting games, Capcom employed Dimps as a co-developer on the *Street Fighter IV* series and many of *The Rumble Fish 2*'s staff worked on it at different points.

The Rumble Fish games aren't as celebrated as SNK or Capcom's fighting games, but they're fascinating all the same. They represent something of a connecting point between the traditions of those famous fighting game developers, and carry all of the mechanical competence you'd expect as a result, while showing the designs that the staff behind classic entries in the *Fatal Fury* and *Street Fighter* series came up with when they had to start from a blank canvas. So while it's easy to see why *The Rumble Fish* may have escaped your attention before, hopefully you'll now appreciate why it's a series that any fan of fighting games should check out at least once. ★

Vertical Stand

» **PLATFORM:** PlayStation 2 » **YEAR:** 2000 » **COST:** £9.99 (launch), £30+ (today, boxed), £10+ (today, unboxed)

During the era of relentless PS2 hype, every single feature of the console was presented as a groundbreaking innovation – and that included its form factor. Rapturous applause broke out when Sony demonstrated the console's ability to stand vertically. Players wept tears of joy when they learned that the PlayStation logo on the disc tray could be rotated to match the console's orientation. However, the naysayers would try to spoil the party. "We've never stood a console vertically before," they doubted. "What if it were to *fall over*? Won't someone *please* think of the children?"

Fortunately, Sony had another industry-shaping innovation waiting in the wings – a piece of moulded plastic, with a blue gradient to match the console's logo and the sticker by the USB ports. When placed beneath a PlayStation 2, the plastic wedges of this pleasantly coloured accessory would widen the base of the console, making it harder for over-excited gamers or particularly inconsiderate cats to tip over. With smart thinking like that throughout its design, it's no wonder the PS2 became the best-selling console of all time. *

PSM3
Crouch

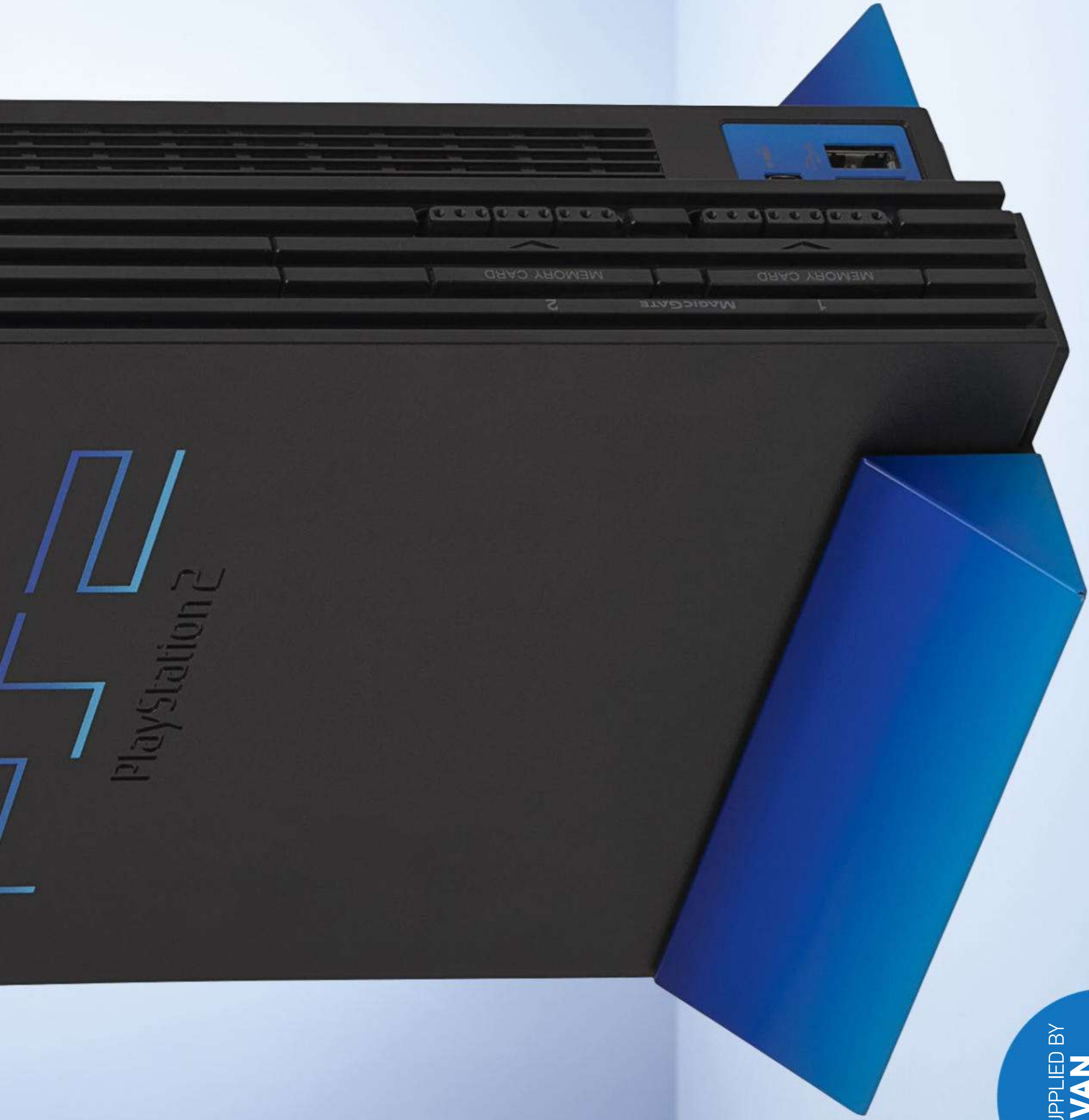
ESSENTIAL GAME

Pro Evolution Soccer 6

You let your mate come over for a game of *Pro Evo* and as always, he's all over you right from kick off – a familiar story, but miracle saves have kept the match goalless 85 minutes in. A last gasp break and one desperate tackle later, you've earned a penalty. Bang – top-right corner. You celebrate, he yanks the controller cable in frustration. You'll never know if the added stability of your new stand saved your PS2 from a nasty fall at that moment, but you like to think so.

Vertical Stand fact

■ The stand we've shown here is the SCPH-10040 model, released worldwide. A Japan-only version with the model number SCPH-10220 also exists, with an extendable base to accommodate an external hard disk.


MEMORY CARD
MEMORY CARD
MagicGate
1
2
PlayStation 2

SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

In the chair with...

ROGER HECTOR

He joined Atari in its black-and-white days and is still making videogames almost half a century later. Roger Hector shares stories of holograms, vector tanks and scratched Sonic soundtracks

Words by Paul Drury

When Roger Hector graduated from the ArtCenter College Of Design in Los Angeles, he was all set to design cars for a living. Then the oil crisis hit, the automobile industry crashed and he took a sharp turn into the arcade business, first at Atari and then Sente, which he jointly founded. His skills as an artist, designer and later as a manager, saw him enjoy a storied career at some of the best-known videogame companies of the last five decades and he's still making games today for the educational charity The Singleton Foundation. "Last year, I went to reunions for both Atari and Sega," smiles Roger. "I had a lot of fun meeting up again with Nolan Bushnell, Tom Kalinske and all these people I hadn't seen for a long time that were involved back in our day. Everyone had fun… but then everyone enjoyed that period of time."

Over your long career, you have worked at some of the biggest names in the industry, including Atari, Bally Sente, Electronic Arts, Disney, Sega and Namco Bandai. Which one were you happiest at?
Oh gosh, that is a tough one to answer because for me, it's been multiple decades and every one of those companies had its own qualities, its own pluses and minuses. I did really enjoy Atari because when I first joined, no one really knew what Atari was. It was almost non-existent.

How did you find out about it, then?
I had a college friend, Peter Takaichi, who worked there. I had moved to the Midwest [of America] and really wasn't enjoying it because the weather was terrible [laughs]. I wanted to come back to California! I grew up in San Jose, pretty close to this strange company Pete worked for called Atari. He said they had made *Pong*, which was the only videogame I'd ever heard of, and I should come and work for them.

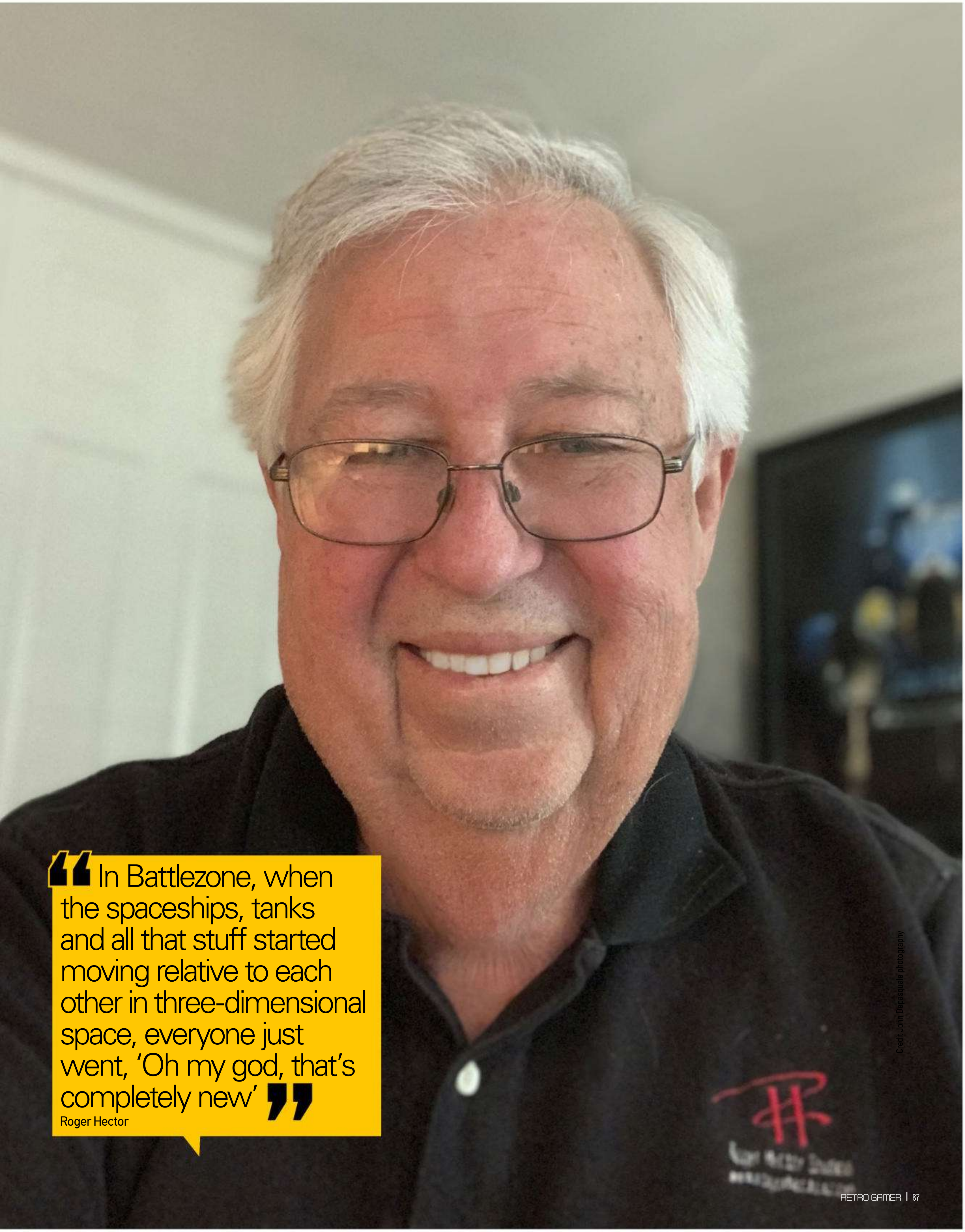
Surely you don't get a job at Atari just because you know someone who works there?
That was pretty much it [laughs]. It was 1976, the early days, and they couldn't hire people with videogame experience, because no one had it, right? So they hired people with 'related experience'. I had a degree in industrial design and learning to draw and render was part [of the course]. Pete ran the design department at Atari, where they designed the coin-op cabinets, because back then, every cabinet was different. I worked there for a year or so and then worked for a guy called George Opperman.

We know that name! He was responsible for much of the art of Atari, including the iconic Fuji logo.
That's right. He was head of art and was very talented and very professional. His department had some great artists. I was trying to make my way through it, so if George came in and said, "We're doing a Superman game," I'd just say, "OK!"

Atari did do a *Superman* game but it was a pinball table not a videogame. Were you producing art for both departments?
Oh yeah and with a pinball machine, there's a lot of art to do. You'd be given a blank playfield, with all the holes in, and you would have to create art for the playfield, the component pieces which would get mounted on it plus the back glass, which was a big production. That was what attracted people to the game.

You worked on Atari's very first pinball table, *The Atarians*, which means you must have had Eugene Jarvis (designer of *Defender* and *Robotron: 2084*) as a colleague. Did you party much with Eugene?
[Laughs] I'd like to say yes but actually, no. I really enjoyed meeting and spending a certain amount of social time with everyone and they represented a broad spectrum of personality and skill types. I absorbed a lot from everyone and Eugene was very good.

You joined the same year Warner bought out Atari. Did that affect your role?
The sale of the company and the transition and all those things pretty much took place over my head. They didn't really impact me. After the acquisition, some projects really took off, like the VCS, and they built a whole new campus for the company, lots of new buildings, with the corporate headquarters across the street from the engineering building where all of the designers ▶

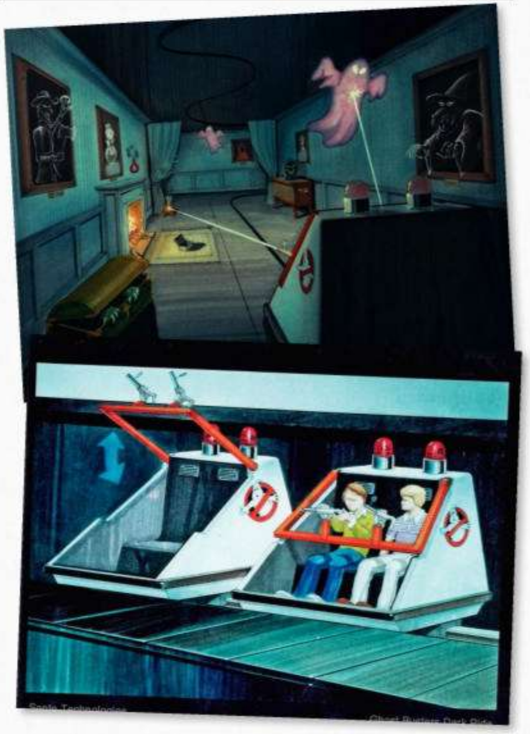


Credit John Depasquale photography

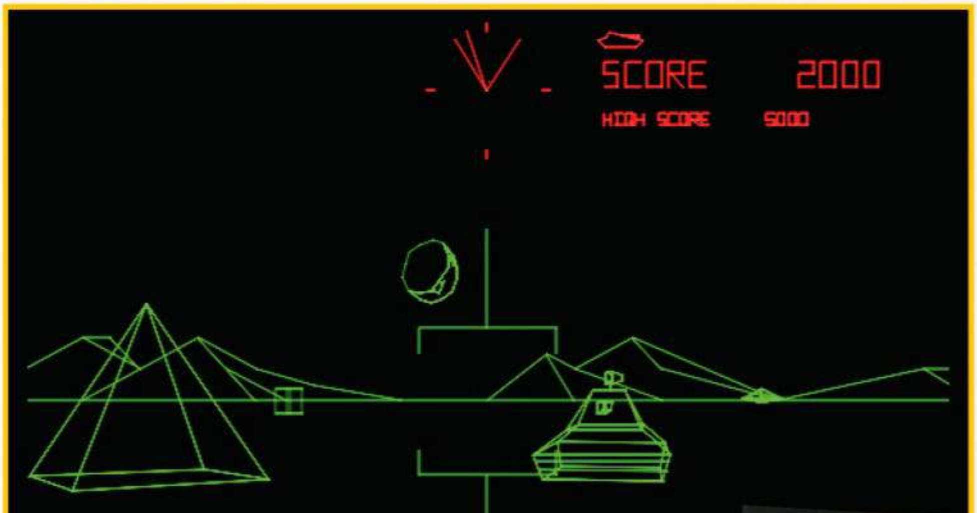
> “In Battlezone, when the spaceships, tanks and all that stuff started moving relative to each other in three-dimensional space, everyone just went, ‘Oh my god, that’s completely new’”
>
> Roger Hector

SELECTED TIMELINE

- **THE ATARIANS** [1976] PINBALL
- **SUBS** [1977] ARCADE
- **SUPER BREAKOUT** [1978] ARCADE
- **RED BARON** [1980] ARCADE
- **BATTLEZONE** [1980] ARCADE
- **WARLORDS** [1980] ARCADE
- **SNAKE PIT** [1984] ARCADE
- **CHICKEN SHIFT** [1984] ARCADE
- **TRIVIAL PURSUIT** [1984] ARCADE
- **STOCKER** [1984] ARCADE
- **GOALIE GHOST** [1984] ARCADE
- **TEAM HAT TRICK** [1985] ARCADE
- **SHRIKE AVENGER** [1986] ARCADE
- **STOMPIN'** [1986] ARCADE
- **NIGHT STOCKER** [1986] ARCADE
- **SKATE OR DIE** [1987] C64
- **JORDAN VS BIRD** [1988] MULTIFORMAT
- **JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL** [1990] MULTIFORMAT
- **PGA TOUR GOLF** [1990] MULTIFORMAT
- **MARIO ANDRETTI'S RACING CHALLENGE** [1991] PC
- **FANTASIA** [1991] MEGA DRIVE
- **DICK TRACY** [1991] MEGA DRIVE/MASTER SYSTEM
- **SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2** [1992] MEGA DRIVE
- **SONIC SPINBALL** [1993] MEGA DRIVE
- **SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3** [1994] MEGA DRIVE
- **SONIC & KNUCKLES** [1994] MEGA DRIVE
- **NIGHTS INTO DREAMS** [1996] SATURN
- **XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS** [1999] PS1
- **ENSLAVED: ODYSSEY TO THE WEST** [2010] PS3/XBOX 360
- **DEAD TO RIGHTS** [2010] PS3/XBOX 360
- **SPLATTERHOUSE** [2010] PS3/XBOX 360
- **PAC-MAN PARTY** [2010] PS3/XBOX 360
- **INVERSION** [2012] PC/PS3/XBOX 360
- **VENTURE VALLEY** [2020] PC/IOS/ANDROID



» These concept sketches for the Hauntington Hotel ride remind us of Duel at Alton Towers which arrived decades later.



» [Arcade] *Battlezone* in all its green vector splendour. See if you can get to the secret cave in the volcano.

and engineers were… I mean, the first building I worked in, which Atari rented, was an old roller-skating rink on Bodegas Avenue! The company was growing so fast, it was kind of amazing.

Did you have many dealings with Nolan Bushnell, the cofounder of Atari?
Oh yeah. I worked at a drawing table, because nobody had computers at their desk at that time, and it would always have something I was working on. My drawings kept going missing overnight and I finally learned it was Nolan! He'd come around late in the evening and if he liked my artwork, he'd walk off with it. I went to his office to get it back and that got us talking. He enjoyed me and I enjoyed him. He was quite the character and we've wound up working together many times since then.

We really like some of the innovative cabinets for early black-and-white games like *Subs* (1977). Were you given free rein to design them however you wished?
We had almost total freedom… and actually very little direction. We would often design more than one version, so for *Subs*, there was a low-cost [model] and a really nice one with a headset, which was much cooler. Same was true with *Battlezone*…

Yes, *Battlezone* had several cabinet iterations, some with a full-face periscope viewer.
That's right but with that game, I wasn't just involved with the cabinet. Ed Rotberg [programmer and designer of *Battlezone*] told me the idea he had for the game and the new vector hardware he was using. It was pretty exciting, a videogame using 3D models, but there wasn't any way to actually design or build 3D computer graphic objects at that time. He asked me if I could figure it out. I said, "Sure."

You had a plan?
No, I had no idea what I was saying. But I did know how to create architectural drawings showing a three-dimensional view. On paper. I identified all of the intersecting points in three-dimensional space with maths. When the spaceships and the tanks and all that stuff started moving relative to each other, everyone just went, "Oh my god, that's completely new."

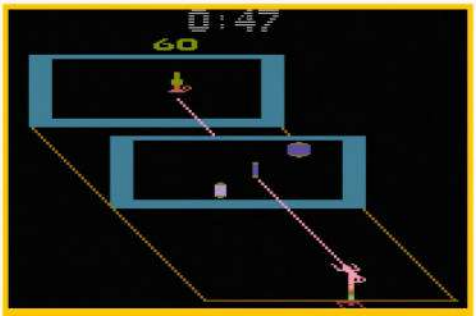
Coming out of the future from ATARI
New Cosmos 3-D programmable game system
You've never seen anything like it before
ATARI GAME PLAN 1981
ATARI

» A holographic handheld in 1980? The Cosmos really could have turned heads if it had made it into production.

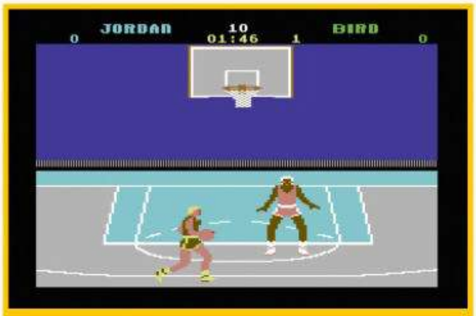
It seems you are moving into game creation at this point.
My career path started with cabinets, then it moved into game art and then it moved into game design because I was actually one of the first guys there that had the idea of drawing storyboards for a game, like you would if you were making a movie. I would use them to present game ideas and that's where *Warlords* came from.

We love that game!
Well, thank you! Every six months or so, Atari would hold an off-site brainstorming meeting. A lot of people showed up with ideas but I'm the one that showed up with paper illustrations of them [laughs]. I came up with the idea of having little walls in the corners with the kings [behind them] and balls that bounce around and break them up. That was all laid out on a big poster.

***Warlords* is a brilliant mash-up of two of Atari's big hits of the Seventies: *Pong* and *Breakout*.**
That was exactly my idea! Somebody liked it and it became a project. I kind of volunteered to illustrate game ideas and after a few successful games were made through that process, people started grabbing me and saying, "I need



» [Atari 2600] *Lasercade*: one of the unreleased games Videa created before joining Sente Technologies.



» [C64] *Jordan VS Bird* was one of EAs early sports licences and offered some excellent one on one dunking sessions.

a design for this…" I became known inside the company as a guy who could design things, illustrate them and then ultimately produce them. Which is when Al approached me.

That would be Al Alcorn, Atari's first engineering employee and creator of *Pong*?
Yeah, he asked me to work under him in research and development and our first project was going to be Cosmos.

The holographic handheld that never made it to market?
That's right. Cosmos came out of the R&D department and basically, we had to invent the technology to process and manufacture multi-image holograms. That had never been done before by anybody.

Where do you start with a project like that?
We started by buying up all of the patents that existed in the world of display holography. A big pile of them! We also hired a couple of really amazing scientists, who specialised in holography and they invented a process for embossing multiple hologram images which could be illuminated and, ultimately, animated, with multiple versions of [an image] using different light sources. No one had ever seen anything like this before. It was all super secret. We had a lab in a separate building from everything else – Al had the authority and the resources to make it all happen. I worked with him and designed and created all of the holograms, which meant I had to build three-dimensional models…

Do you mean on a computer screen?
No, physical models! I'd put monsters and spaceships in an environment of icicles or asteroids and so on. Then the holographic image could be made and multiple images would be superimposed over one another.

You created prototypes for eight Cosmos titles, including *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*, which we can probably visualise, but what about *Destroyer* and *Superman*?

> "What made Jordan Vs Bird, John Madden Football and all those games really successful was that we were taking their ideas, not just sticking their names on the box"
> Roger Hector

Destroyer was a scene of two battleships on either side of the screen and you fired missiles until one was sunk. Atari had the licence for *Superman* already so I built a little scale model of Superman and put him in a city of tall buildings. You had to capture various bad guys and put them in jail cells that were below the city…

It sounds like Cosmos was all ready to go to market.
It was a finished product, including the packaging. We took it to a trade show for the toy industry in New York City and we came back with enough orders for the first year of production – tens of thousands of orders. We thought we'd been really successful but when we got back to California, all the corporate

FIVE TO PLAY

Essential games from Roger's bulging back catalogue

SUBS

■ Roger arrived at Atari when the games world was still monochrome and bespoke cabinets were made for each new release. The ambitious cabinet that was created for *Subs* features two screens, two ship wheels and radar overlays, which really add to the atmosphere of the tense nautical battles taking place on the screen.

WARLORDS

■ Anyone who has played the VCS version with three other players will know how utterly compelling the '*Pong* to the death' gameplay is. Roger came up with the concept for the arcade original, which includes fireball-spitting dragons, and was produced as a beautiful cocktail table, along with the upright model.

PLAYER1 003550

CHICKEN SHIFT

■ Sente's key idea of producing generic cabinets and allowing arcade operators to easily switch game boards may have been a few years ahead of its time, but the company did produce some decent titles for the Sente System. This is our favourite – a simple but maddeningly addictive puzzler.

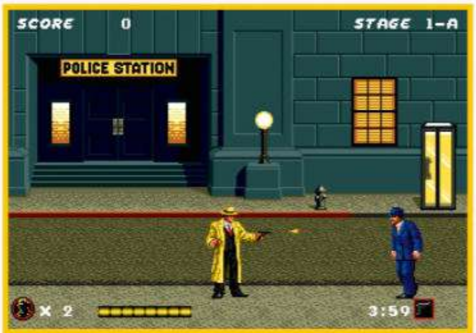
SONIC SPINBALL

■ We could have been obvious and named *Sonic The Hedgehog 2* or *3*, both produced while Roger was head of Sega Technical Institute, but for something a bit different, we recommend this rather entertaining mash-up of the blue blur and pinball – plus it's a nice nod to Roger's pinball artwork for Atari in the Seventies.

ENSLAVED: ODYSSEY TO THE WEST

■ During his time at Namco Bandai in the Noughties, Roger oversaw some interesting titles such as *Dead To Rights* and *Inversion*. However, we are highlighting this, not only for the impressive art direction and Nitin Sawhney soundtrack, but because it's Roger's favourite from that period of time.

guys were talking about was the Atari VCS. *Space Invaders* had just come out and it was going mad. Ray Kassar [CEO of Atari] said, "Good job creating this new thing guys but we're putting it on the shelf while we ramp up production of the VCS."

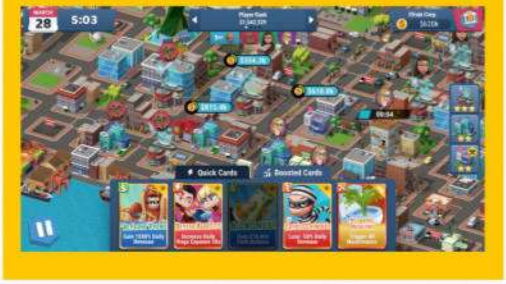


» [Mega Drive] *Dick Tracy* was one of many licensed games Roger oversaw during his time at Disney.

BUSINESS IS FUN

What Roger is doing now

■ Roger's most recent project combines two areas he knows a lot about: videogames and running a business. "It started with a phone call from an old friend of mine, Gary Krisel, who used to be the president of Disney Animation," explains Roger. "He introduced me to Will and Cary [Singleton], who were setting up The Singleton Foundation, a non-profit organisation which promotes entrepreneurship and financial literacy. They asked me if I could do a game that both entertains and teaches players how to run a business." The result is *Venture Valley*, a free-to-play, multi-platform, multiplayer title, which lets up to six budding CEOs compete against each other in a competitive market. "It starts very simply with something like a dog-walking business, something that anyone can understand. They learn how to price the dog walking to be competitive but still make money and learn terminology like net and gross profit. There are lots and lots of businesses to choose from and it gets increasingly more sophisticated, from running a pizza parlour right up to a robot factory." You can flex your entrepreneurial muscle and even win real money in eSports contests at venturevalleygame.com



That must have been very disappointing. Is this the reason you left Atari shortly afterwards in 1981?

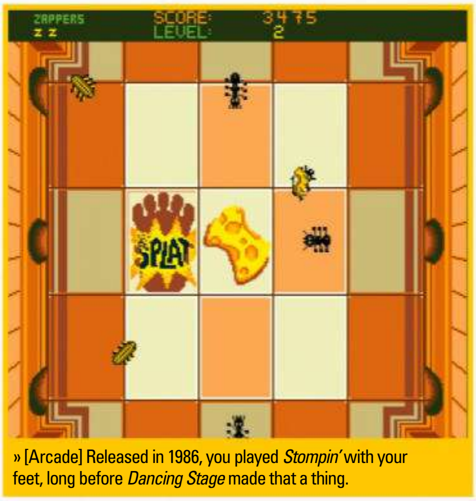
We thought, "Wow, if we can create and build a product that takes off the way the Cosmos did and then not even get to see it built, well, let's go do something else." That's when Ed Rotberg, Howie Delman, guys I'd worked with in the coin-op division, and myself left Atari and started Videa.

We understand the original plan was to be an independent developer of arcade games and sell them to established companies like Williams, Gottlieb and Atari. Were you confident you would have buyers?

I was ignorant enough to be confident [laughs]. I did cut a deal with Gottlieb [for *Gridlee*] and we also did some VCS titles [*Lasercade* and *Meltdown*] which several companies bought but then changed their minds about selling videogames. We ended up selling them to Atari but they never got produced because it was right at the pivot time for them.

Atari and the whole videogames market was crashing at this point and none of your Videa games got released. You must have been quite relieved when your old boss, Nolan Bushnell, comes along and offers to buy you out.

Actually, we had two interested parties: one from Nolan and the other from Coca Cola! It was a short debate. We knew Coke was a giant company with lots of resources but how they would handle getting into the games business was an open question. We knew Nolan and how he worked.



» [Arcade] Released in 1986, you played *Stompin'* with your feet, long before *Dancing Stage* made that a thing.

> "One of our guys says to Michael Jackson, 'Why don't you write the music for the next Sonic game?' And he says, 'OK.' Everyone's jaw dropped"
>
> Roger Hector

You join Nolan as part of his new venture, Sente Technologies, but then he gets into financial difficulty and ends up selling to Bally. It sounds like a stressful time for you?

I think that's a good term, yes [laughs]. Bally seemed like our best shot but there were a lot of uncertainties and points of conflict. We had our own factory at Sente in California and Bally had theirs in Chicago. While we had our own production facility we could make what we wanted. Bally kind of viewed us as competitors, though, and shut down our factory. Then they started moving people from California back to Chicago.

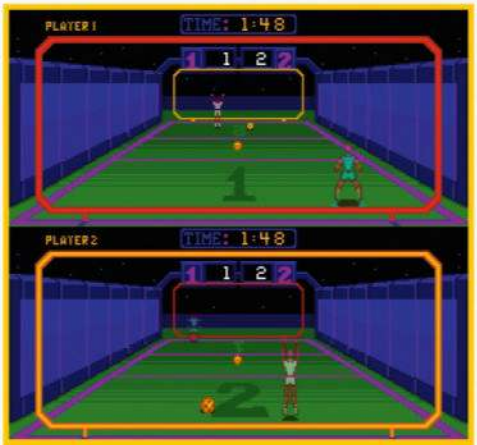
That must have been a blow to your independence but you still produced several dozen coin-op games during the mid-Eighties. Have you any favourites?

One that broke new ground was *Stompin'*. It had a platform of switches that sat on the ground and the game was up in front of you. You had a couple of handlebars to hold on to, and you had to use your feet to stomp on the squares that move the characters in the right direction.

A game you played with your feet long before dance games became popular!

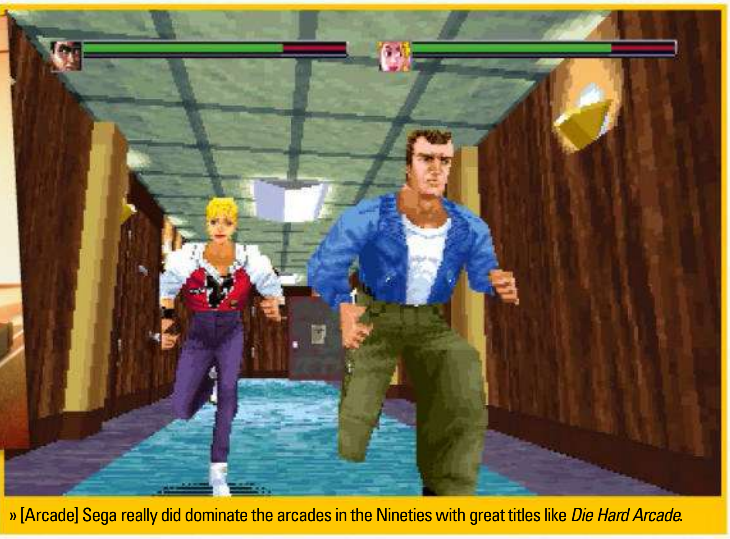
Yeah and it was a lot of fun. I really liked *Night Stocker*, too, because you were driving with one hand and had a gun in the other. Having those two different controls, to steer and shoot, hadn't been done before.

Sente were certainly trying new things. We



» [Arcade] *Goalie Ghost* is a fun little game, like the spiritual predecessor to *Cosmic Smash*.

» A rare photo of the Shrike Avenger prototype cabinet. It's a health and safety nightmare…



» [Arcade] Sega really did dominate the arcades in the Nineties with great titles like *Die Hard Arcade*.

notice you even produced an interactive ride for a theme park.
Hauntington Hotel! [Laughs] That was a lot of fun. As senior VP of engineering [of Sente], I was trying to expand our product line in new directions. We designed this theme-park attraction, which would be three or four minutes long, and you'd ride from room to room in this hotel. We created a variety of ghosts, which were animated, and you had to shoot them with this laser beam and get a score for every hit. We were going to use the *Ghostbusters* licence for that!

Bally Sente was not short of interesting ideas and yet you left in 1987. Why?
My contract with Bally was up and I had no desire to renew it. A lot of us left at that point and basically, Sente was wound down. I moved to EA as a senior producer and was assigned the category of games: 'sports, action and arcade'.

EA was licensing some big names in the sports world for its games. Did you get to meet some of the stars?
Oh yeah. I got to meet Michael Jordan when we were doing *Jordan Vs Bird* and I was the one who signed up Mario Andretti, the Formula One racing driver [for *Mario Andretti Racing Challenge*]. I met him at the Laguna Seca racetrack in Monterey and he'd rented the whole track for a day to test drive his IndyCar and get it tuned up for the forthcoming race. He would do a really fast lap then come into the pits and while his team tweaked the wings and the suspension to optimise the car's performance, he'd talk to me about the settings of his car and his whole philosophy of racing.

SCORE 67050
ENEMIES IN AREA 16
SHIELDS
SHOTS 599

» [Arcade] *Night Stocker*: Guns – good. Driving – good. Gameplay – meh.

So he actually contributed ideas to the game?
Oh yeah. That was the concept that made the *Jordan Vs Bird*, *John Madden Football* and all those games really successful. We were taking their ideas, not just sticking their names on the box.

After leaving EA, you worked for Disney on some of its big cartoon and film licences before moving to Sega right as *Sonic* mania is really exploding.
It was truly an incredible time. I'd met some of the senior Sega executives when they'd licensed some Disney characters like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, because I was the guy that approved their work – or sometimes disapproved it. Mark Cerny, who I'd known at Atari, had started the Sega Technical Institute, a top-level group of engineers, designers and creatives. He had decided to step away and they hired me as the replacement. I ended up managing people like Yuji Naka, Hirokazu Yasuhara, Kunitake Aoki and Naoto Ohshima as they finished up work on *Sonic 2*.

You must have been there for the whole Sonic 2sday marketing onslaught.
Oh, it was huge and wildly successful. For *Sonic & Knuckles*, I even did a segment for an MTV show called *Rock And Rock*, filmed on Alcatraz. I'm still embarrassed by that to this day…

You left Sega shortly after the Saturn was released. Was there a link?
[pauses] Let's just say there was a shake-up of senior people and I just wasn't as excited to work there anymore. I could go on and on about why the Saturn didn't work but there was a series of decisions that really changed the future of Sega. It was the right time for me to step away.

WHO'S BAD?

Meeting the King Of Pop

■ "I get this call from one of Michael Jackson's people, telling me *Sonic* was Michael's favourite game and could he come to Sega and meet the people who made it," says Roger, recalling when the King Of Pop came to visit. "He came in after hours, I gave him a tour and introduced him to the creators of the *Sonic* games and he was thrilled. You could see he was a total Sonic fan – he was really, really excited. So one of our guys says, 'Why don't you write the music for the next *Sonic*?' And he says, 'OK.' Everyone's jaw dropped. I'm thinking, 'How are we gonna work this out?' but basically, he did write the entire score for *Sonic 3*. I had a CD of it! It was all in the game and we're just a few weeks away from delivering the final code so it can be produced for Christmas that year and then stories start appearing in the papers about Michael and, you know, him being the bad guy with kids. Everyone panicked. I mean, we had kept it a secret because it was going to be this huge, surprise announcement that Michael was doing the score, then boom, this thing comes out about him. Sega Of Japan made the decision to take [his music] out… I had a composer on my staff, who'd done a bunch of videogame music in the past, called Howard Drossin. I told him he had to replace the audio [for *Sonic 3*], basically 16 weeks' worth of work, in a week and a half. I said we'd slide food under his door but he couldn't leave the office. And he did it! He was an amazing guy and has gone on to do a lot of movie music in Hollywood but he got his break at STI as a last-minute replacement for Michael Jackson!"

You went on to be president of Universal Studios Digital Arts and later senior vice president of Namco Bandai and you are still involved with making games at The Singleton Foundation. That's almost half a century in the games business. Did you go to the Atari 50th reunion last year?
Yeah and it was a blast. There were many, many people there that I hadn't seen in a long time. We all walked up to each other and just went, "Oh my god!" ✱

Thanks to Martyn Carroll for additional help.

Densetsu No Stafy 2

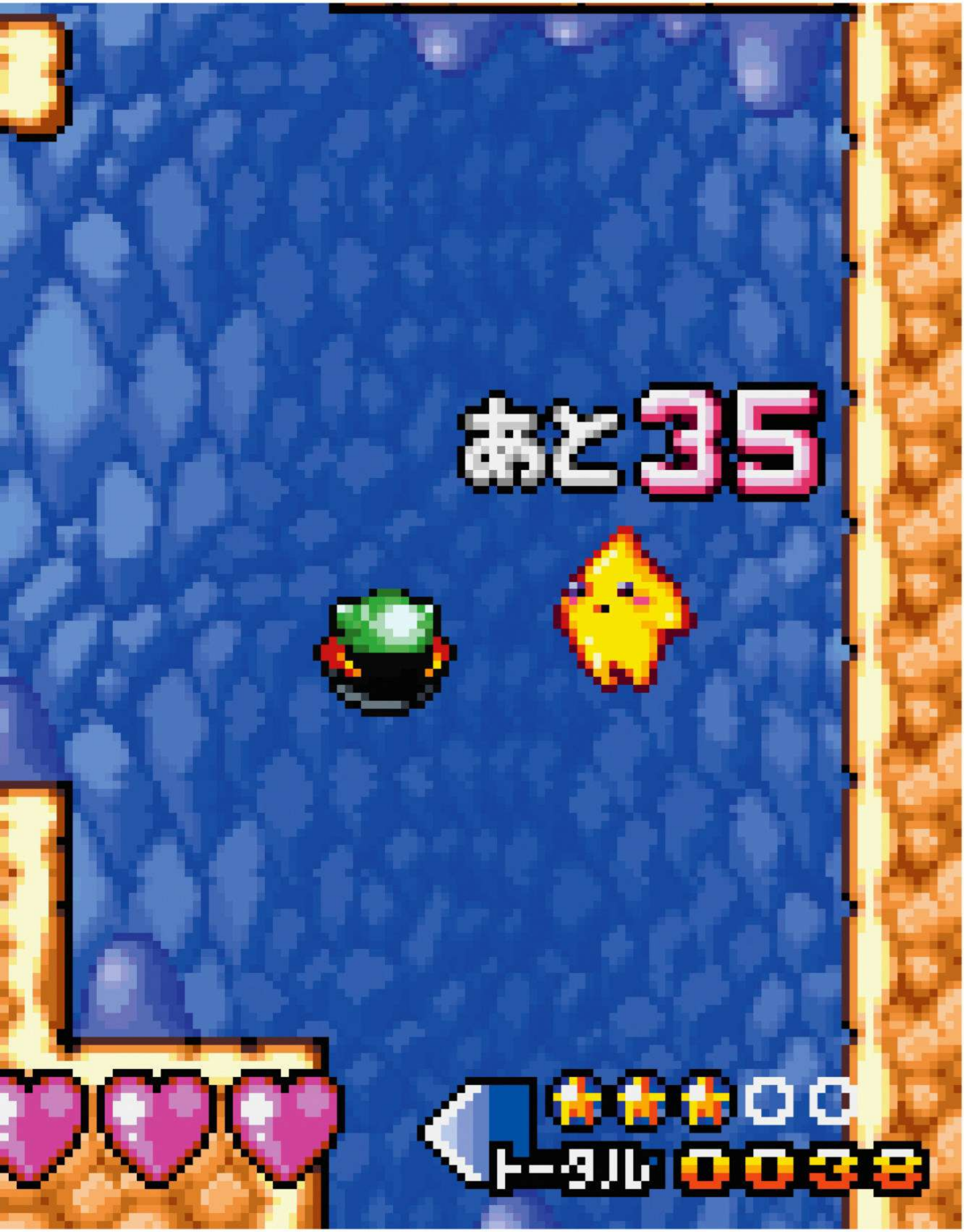
PUTTING THE STAR IN STARFISH

» GAME BOY ADVANCE » 2003 » TOSE/NINTENDO

Back in 2007, I was fortunate enough to snag a brand-new Game Boy Micro for less than £20. I didn't *need* it – I already had two Game Boy Advance SPs and a DS – but there was something about that brilliantly bright LCD screen that drew me in. In any case, it revitalised my interest in the platform and I set about exploring the library further. One game that I bought based on little more than a recommendation and a decent price was *Densetsu No Stafy 2*.

I probably should have been more wary of buying a Japanese game that I knew very little about, and it turns out there is a decent amount of text in the game. But it's a platform game, with little visual guides that show up when new mechanics are introduced as the game goes on, so it turns out that it's actually pretty playable with no language knowledge. It definitely does go on too, as it has a huge number of levels to tackle. It's the kind of game where the developer clearly knew exactly what it was going for, and has executed that plan to perfection.

We all say that it's the gameplay that truly matters, and that should be the case, but this is one of those games that makes me question my conviction when I do. It's a beautiful-looking game in general, but it's Stafy himself that really stands out. Everything he does is animated with such gusto that you can't help but come to love him – when his eyes are bugging out as he runs or when he flops onto his face to slide into narrow gaps, the graphics genuinely elevate those common platform game actions. The whole game is a joy to play, simply because you can't wait to see what its protagonist is going to do next, and it's amazing that Nintendo never brought it to our shores because that kind of appeal is universal. ✱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>> This month we take Kirby's new HD remaster for a spin, read through Van Burnham's second Supercade book and find out if Metroid Prime Remastered is worth its high price tag

PICKS OF THE MONTH

DARRAN

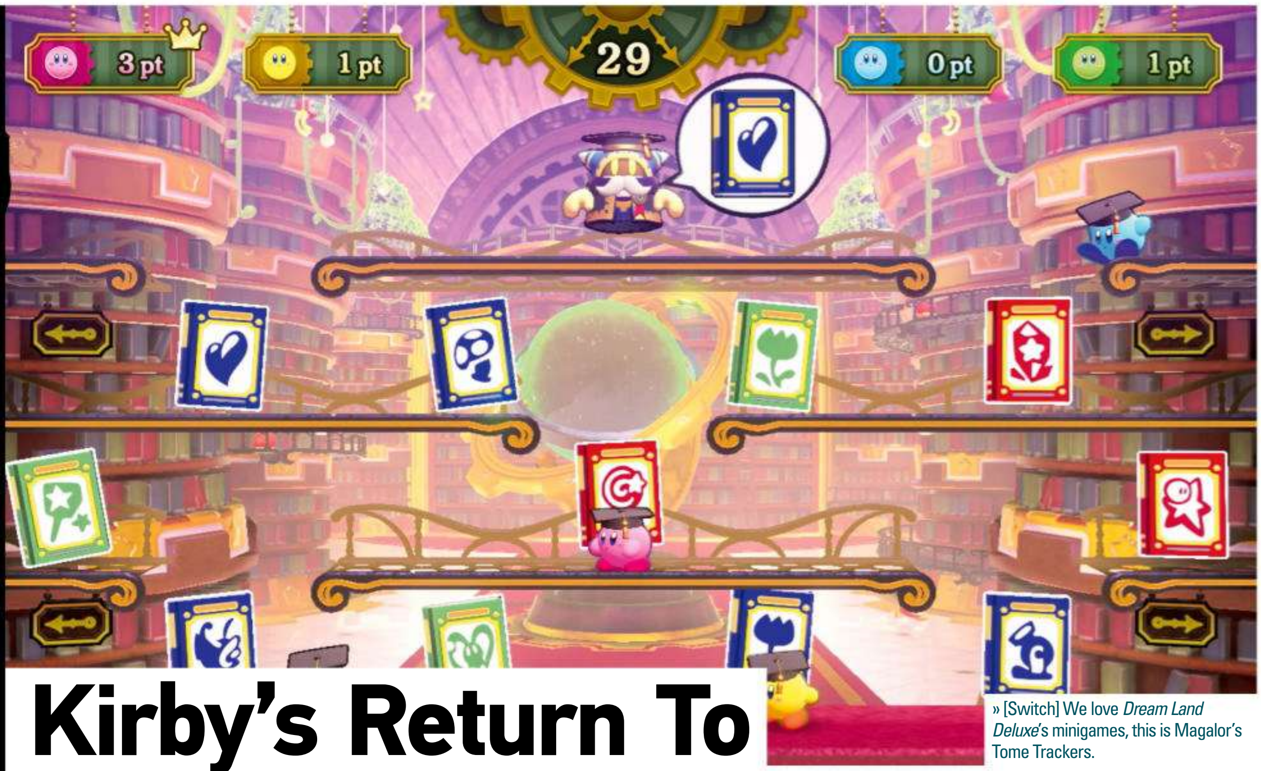
Out Zone

I've become obsessed with Bitwave Games' superb adaptation of this Toaplan shooter, which is packed with neat quality-of-life improvements.

NICK

Akka Arrh

Trying to complete stages with as few bombs as possible is a challenge, but one I love coming back to. Another great effort from Llamasoft.



» [Switch] We love *Dream Land Deluxe*'s minigames, this is Magalor's Tome Trackers.

Kirby's Return To Dream Land Deluxe

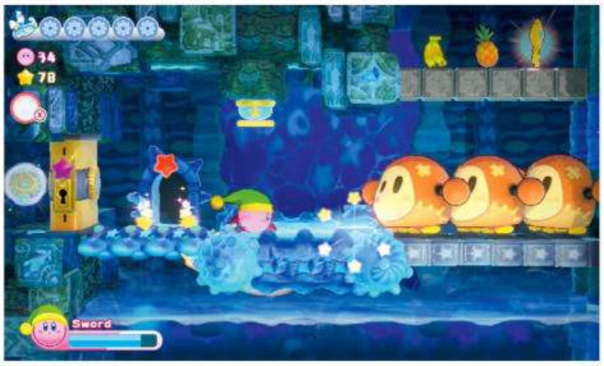
A REMASTER THAT CERTAINLY DOESN'T SUCK

INFORMATION

- » **FORMAT REVIEWED:** SWITCH
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £49.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** HAL LABORATORY, VANPOOL
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

» [Switch] Many Energy Spheres require keys to reach them, creating clever little puzzles for Kirby to solve.

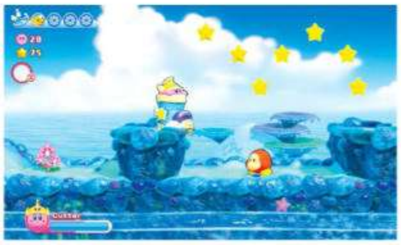
***Kirby's Adventure Wii* (as *Kirby's Return To Dream Land* was known in PAL regions) didn't really seem to garner much attention on its original release, possibly because it felt a lot more conventional after the inventive *Kirby's Epic Yarn*.** Hopefully, this new Switch release may change that because while *Kirby's Return To Dream Land Deluxe* is rather easy to complete (at least on its first run) it's absolutely chock-full of things to do and this Switch update only expands on that, making for a great package.



The twee story sees a stranger called Magolor asking Kirby for help after he crash-lands on Kirby's planet and wrecks his spaceship, the Lor Starcutter. Because he's an awfully caring chap, Kirby agrees to retrieve the five missing parts of the downed craft so Magolor can return to his homeland and that's where the adventure begins.

Said quest is classic Kirby with the little pink tyke inhaling enemies and using their abilities against them, just as he always does. As well as the new Copy Abilities found in the original Wii game, *Dream Land Deluxe* adds several more, including the excellent Mecha Ability that lets Kirby fire lasers and lob fiery rockets above him. Kirby can also use a Super Inhale that can suck up bigger objects and he's also able to utilise powerful Super Abilities that can destroy huge parts of the environments, creating new areas for the cute blob to explore.

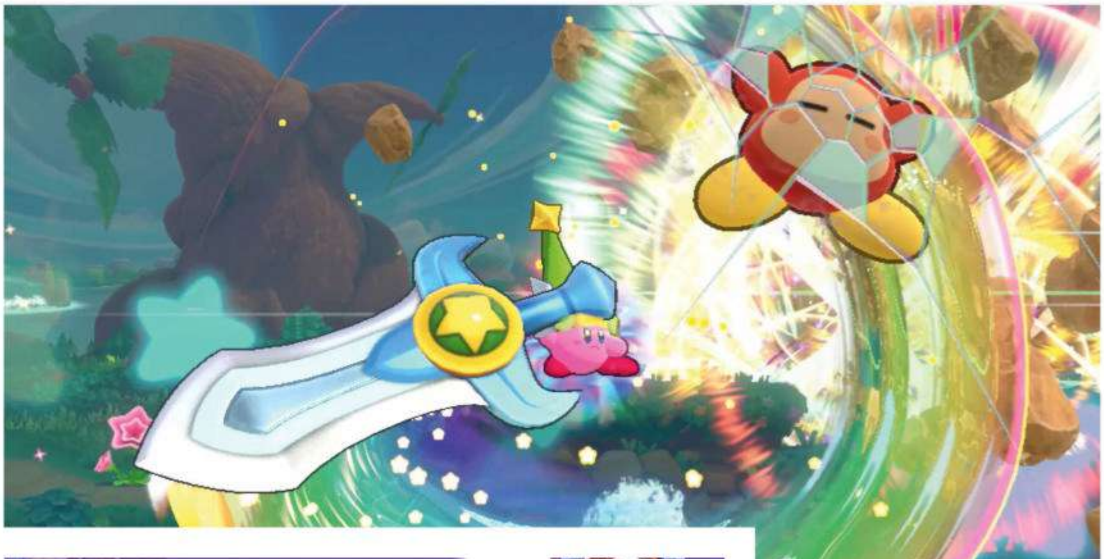
Catering for up to four players, *Dream Land Deluxe* is a fairly easy game and Kirby's new skills make



» [Switch] It addition to his Copy Abilities Kirby has other ways to traverse the colourful levels.

BRIEF HISTORY

» Created by Masahiro Sakurai, Kirby made his first appearance in 1992 on Nintendo's Game Boy in *Kirby's Dream Land*. The 1993 follow-up *Kirby's Adventure* introduced many of the mechanics that would appear in later games, including his iconic Copy Ability. His most recent adventures include the *Fall Guys*-alike *Kirby's Dream Buffet* and *Kirby And The Forgotten Land*, Kirby's first full 3D adventure.



» [Switch] Kirby's Super Abilities not only cause immense damage, but can also reveal previously hidden items.

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

KIRBY AND THE AMAZING MIRROR

BEAM
Waddle Doo

▼ SOMETHING NEW

KIRBY AND THE FORGOTTEN LAND

Beam
Hammer
Tornado
Stone

» [Switch] *Dream Land Deluxe*'s drop-in and out multiplayer is a lot of fun.

his quest even simpler, but the real challenge is discovering the Energy Spheres that are scattered throughout the colourful stages. Many are cleverly hidden, requiring thoughtful use of Kirby's skills, which certainly adds to the game's challenge. Additionally, mini-bosses carry a pair of the coveted items. Not only can they be tough to defeat, but they can be hard to reach as well, as they're found at the end of surprisingly tough auto-scrolling stages where Kirby gets chased by a barrier which will crush him if he's not careful.

There's a great sense of discovery in *Dream Land Deluxe*, which is further heightened by the large number of extras that are unlocked in the Lor Starcutter as Kirby's epic quest continues. In addition to one-off challenges that are based around Kirby's Copy Abilities, there are also dressing rooms where Kirby can immediately acquire new forms to take into the game, while ten minigames can also be unlocked. Games like Egg Catcher sees Kirby trying to eat a certain number of eggs while avoiding the bombs that are occasionally chucked at him, while Magolor's Tome Trackers has you racing around a library trying to find specific books before your opponents. Most of them are good fun, especially in multiplayer, with only the likes of Bomb Rally not really landing.

Although Kirby's minigames require Energy Spheres to unlock them you can also enjoy them by visiting Merry Magoland, a brand-new area that not only lets Kirby wear cute masks and go online, but also adds 100 missions for the minigames and a minigame variant called Samurai Kirby 100. Magoland is not only a nice way of playing some of the later games, but its 100 missions means that there's plenty of longevity once you're done with Kirby's main adventure, the challenging Extra mode and The Arena, which pits you against increasingly dangerous foes.

Another great exclusive extra, Magolor Epilogue: The Interdimensional Traveler, is also unlocked upon completing the game. We won't give too much away here other than to say it's an entertaining score-attack game where Magolor has to recover his lost powers and complete a level by chaining together attacks, with bigger chains leading to a potential platinum trophy at the level's end. It's a great new addition to the game thanks to its well-designed stages that only become more interesting to navigate as Magolor upgrades his skills.

We've really enjoyed our time with *Dream Land Deluxe*, and while it hasn't had the same graphical overhaul that *Metroid Prime Remastered* has had, the bountiful extras do enhance what was already a highly enjoyable game. Yes it's rather easy, but *Dream Land Deluxe* is a substantial upgrade over the Wii original and a must play if you never played that version before. ✱

In a nutshell

Gorgeous to look at and packed with new content, *Dream Land Deluxe* is a superb improvement over the Wii original. Don't miss it.

» Score **88%**

3-1 Energy Spheres Complete!
Sword

Fatty Puffer

» [Switch] There are some great boss battles in *Dream Land Deluxe*, with Fatty Puffer being a particularly memorable one.

» [Switch] The new adventure where you play as Magolor is excellent fun and offers plenty of replay value.

PICK OF THE MONTH

Akka Arrh

» System: PC (version tested), PS4, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S, Switch **» Buy it for:** £16.75 **» Buy it from:** Online

Playing the original version of *Akka Arrh* on *Atari 50: The Anniversary Celebration* recently was a fascinating look at what could have been, but it's easy to see why the game never made it beyond the prototype stage. One look at the screenshots is probably enough to tell you that this modern version has been created by Jeff Minter, and by incorporating elements of another Atari classic, he's managed to make the whole concept click.

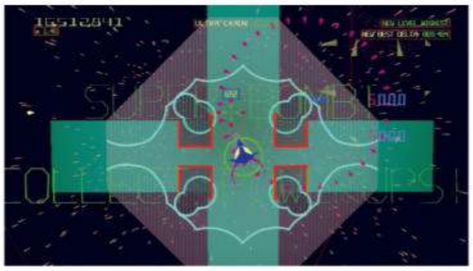
You have two ways to attack – bombs and bullets. Bombs create explosions that fan out as in *Missile Command*, and cause chain reactions when they hit enemies, with more points awarded as the combo grows. Bullets have limited ammo, but firing them doesn't reset your combo, whereas launching another bomb does. As stages pass, your explosions will change shape and the speed of their spread will vary.

You have a limited supply of Energy Pods – you'll lose one if shot, and if an enemy makes it past your defences and gets downstairs it'll try to steal one – lose them all and it's game over, so you'll need to switch levels and deal with that. Though it sounds like a lot to keep track of, the game gives you enough instruction over the early stages that you can learn on the job.

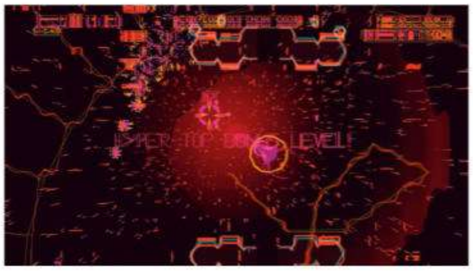
Once you've got your bearings, explosions ripple out in an enormously pleasing fashion to create some spectacular sights. The challenge really comes down to shooting as little as possible, as spare bullets can carry over into the next stage and if you have enough, you'll replenish your Energy Pods.

The close-up perspective does sometimes make it feel like incoming enemies are arriving with little warning, especially when so much else is happening on-screen. The default control scheme isn't ideal either, but with the two-button controls selected *Akka Arrh* is a welcome new take on the shooting genre.

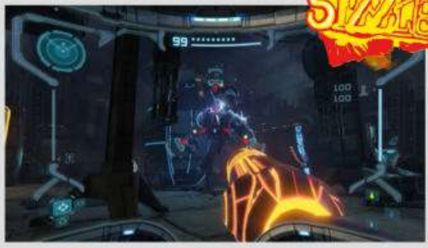
» Score **87%**



» [PC] This is creative destruction, with beautiful patterns emerging from all the carnage.



» [PC] Llamasoft's traditional intense visual effects can sometimes be a little bit overwhelming.



Metroid Prime Remastered

» System: Switch **» Buy it for:** £34.99
» Buy it from: Online, retail

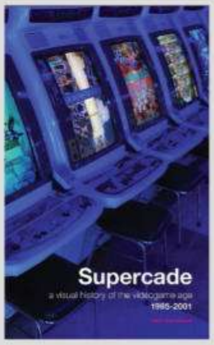
We may still be waiting for *Metroid Prime 4*, but this stunning update of Retro Studios' first *Metroid* game is the perfect stopgap. Everything about *Metroid Prime Remastered* is superb. It looks sensational with vastly improved visuals that enhance the alien-looking environments, while the controls have been greatly overhauled to appease modern gamers. Although the new motion controls aren't as good as those found in the Wii update, the FPS controls that Retro Studios has added make a huge difference, making a great game even better. While it's light on extras, the new controls and staggering visuals make this the definitive version of a truly exceptional game. Don't miss it.

DARRAN JONES

» Score **95%**

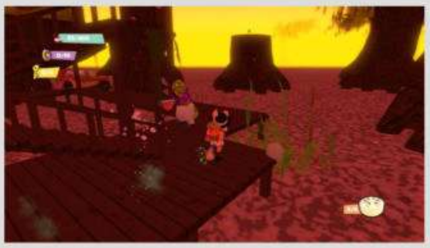
Supercade: A Visual History Of The Videogame Age 1985-2001

» Buy it for: $50 (softcover), $70 (hardcover)
» Buy it from: shop.supercade.com, amazon.co.uk



Van Burnham's original *Supercade* was a defining book when it came to telling the early story of videogame history. After a successful Kickstarter the sequel is now here and it's an excellent follow-up. Although it feels a little light on interviews, the ones that are included with the likes of Richard Garriott are very good. There's also some fascinating insight from a number of industry veterans, including Mike Mika and Tim Lapetino. The book looks incredible too, thanks to gorgeous photography and dynamic screenshots that beautifully highlight the many games this second volume covers. The end result is a superb love letter to the early days of gaming that no fan should be without.

DARRAN JONES



Clive 'N' Wrench

» System: PS5 (version tested), PS4, Switch, PC
» Buy it for: £24.99 **» Buy it from:** Online, retail

Dr Daucus has stolen time-travel blueprints for evil purposes, so it's up to the rabbit and monkey duo of Clive and Wrench to put a stop to him in this collectathon 3D platformer. The classic level themes and homages to other games show the developer's love for the genre, and there are some memorable character designs. Unfortunately, the game is beset by problems – scenery frequently disappears momentarily, collision detection never feels fully convincing, jumping is awkward and bosses can be frustrating. None of these issues would be ruinous if present individually, but their cumulative effect is likely to wear down all but the most ardent fans of the genre.

NICK THORPE

» Score **52%**

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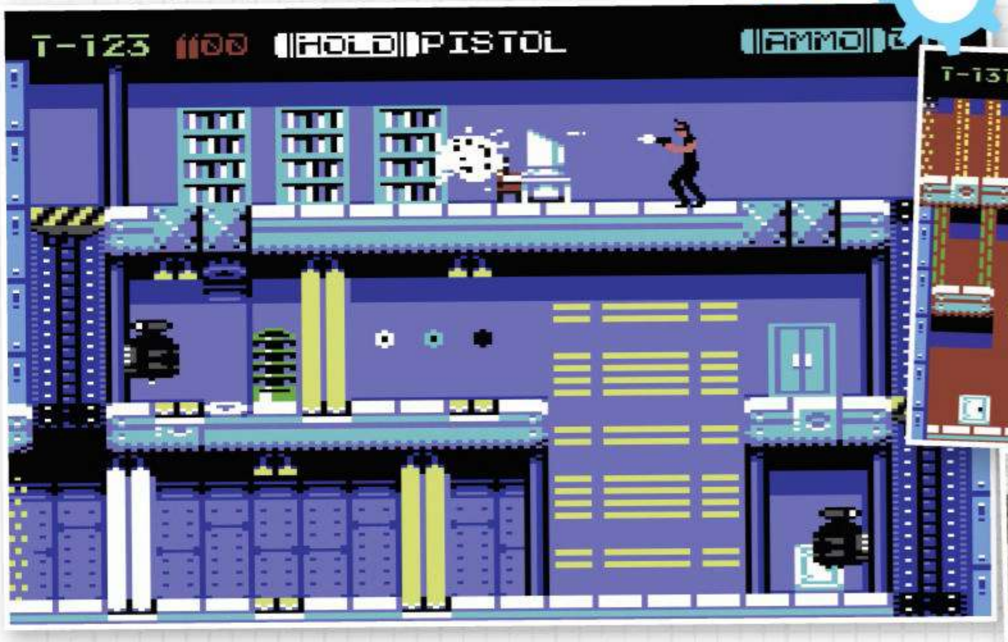
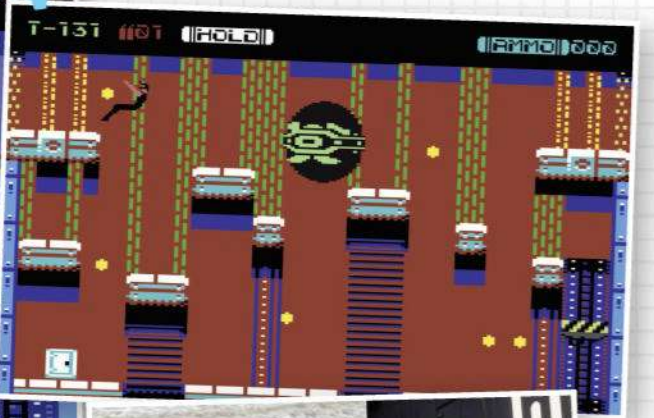
THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE/>





<INTRO> EXCITING NEWS FLOWS INTO RETRO GAMER REGULARLY ABOUT NEW HOMEBREW PROJECTS. AGENT 4125 IS COMING OUT OF RETIREMENT TO STAR IN A NEW IMPOSSIBLE MISSION, AMIGA OWNERS WILL BE PRACTISING A BIT OF ROGUECRAFT, AND THE MEGA DRIVE HAS SEVERAL IMPRESSIVE ARCADE CONVERSIONS LINED UP. THE NES ALSO GETS LOVE THIS TIME FROM MATT HUGHSON. SO, IF YOU HAVE A PROJECT THAT NEEDS COVERAGE, EMAIL RETROGAMER@FUTURENET.COM AND SEE YOURSELF IN A FUTURE ISSUE. </INTRO>

ICON64

<MAIN HEADER>

IMPOSSIBLE INTEREST

<INTRO> WITH PERMISSION FROM THE COPYRIGHT HOLDERS, ICON64 IS CRAFTING THE OFFICIAL SEQUEL IMPOSSIBLE MISSION III FOR THE COMMODORE 64 </INTRO>

<!--- SECRET AGENT TREVOR STOREY (LEFT), AND STORMTROOPER STUART COLLIER (RIGHT) READING AN INFORMATION DOSSIER. --->

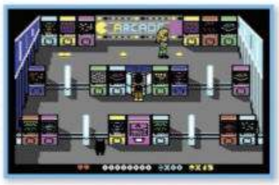
<BODY> **"It's a complete honour to be on such a high-profile title," says programmer Stu Collier, who creates remakes of classic games for ovine.net** "Trev [Storey] does all the design, although I have a say if something isn't possible or needs to be tweaked for technical reasons. If something doesn't work when it goes to testers, it's addressed and changed."

"Testing takes months, long repetitive months. There's no pressure at all, we just need to keep it *Impossible Mission*-like – and like everything we do, it's done for the fun of it," says Trevor Storey, artist and game designer. "I use Promotion and Photoshop mainly, then bring them into the various editors and tweak them. For me, the box art is very important, it's what drew me to titles in the Eighties. Manuals are always fun to create but I doubt many people read them." Stu codes using, "The excellent C64Studio from Georg Rottensteiner. I also use Spritepad/Charpad software from SubChrist. I tend to write all my editors in VB6 Classic. We then use Google Docs to keep in touch." Musician Saul Cross will once again be involved, as he was with earlier ICON64 titles (see Iconic Impressions).

Two aspects of the original classic are staying – the speech and the somersault jump. "As we are licensed, we can use the original sound engine so it will be instantly recognisable," says Stu. "I take my hat off to the original developers, how they managed to super-compress the speech is amazing. I've been busy making the main character behave the same way as the original as much as I can." Trevor adds, "The player's animations are iconic and needed to be in there."

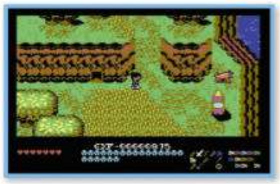
The original's time limit and punch-card puzzles added difficulty with its procedurally generated map, but that has changed for the new game. "It's a fixed map with some randomness thrown in," Stu explains. "Robots will randomise, along with searchable items appearing in random positions. I can say the main character can now shoot a gun and lay explosives!"

ICONIC IMPRESSIONS



ARCADE DAZE

<Made by Stu Collier, pick up coins and play various arcade machines in this title that's heavily influenced by minigame marathon *Lazy Jones*. />

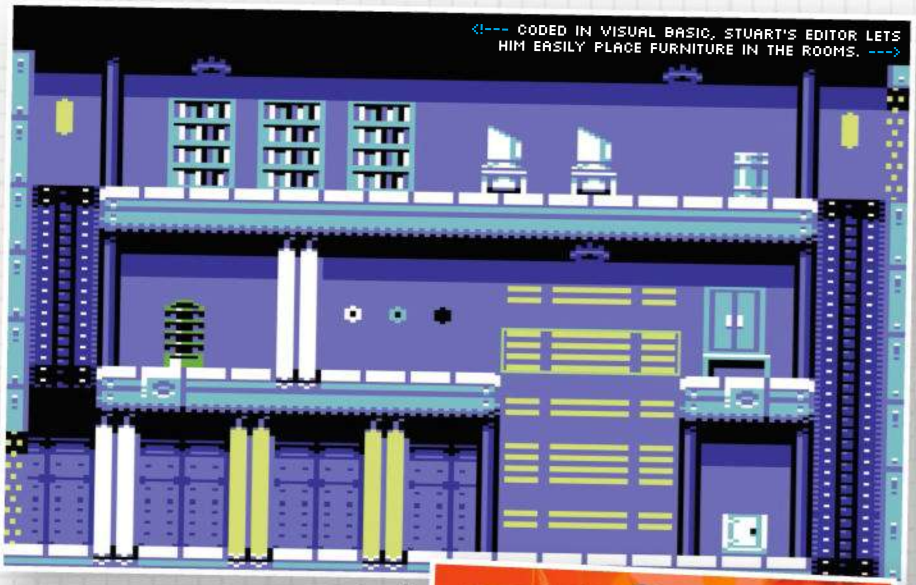


THE ISLE OF THE CURSED PROPHET

<Explore the haunted island in this Nintendo-style action RPG coded by Achim Volkers. It has cool cinematic intro and outro sequences. />

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**

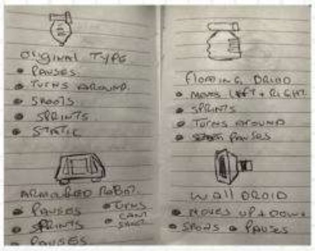


<!--- CODED IN VISUAL BASIC, STUART'S EDITOR LETS HIM EASILY PLACE FURNITURE IN THE ROOMS. --->

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION III
PSYTRONIK
ICON64

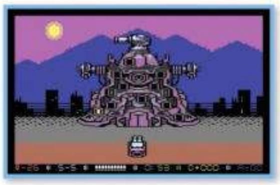
<!--- A GLIMPSE OF FORTHCOMING ICON64 TITLE DEMOGORGON. --->

So what's next for ICON64? Trevor lists the many titles currently in development. "*Dragon Punch*, *Skyhawk*, *Demogorgon* and *Ladybird* – getting them finished is another thing though," he says, adding that his dream project is, "The isometric game I have already designed – *Holcan* – that hopefully, we'll get onto one day." Stu is also looking ahead, "We have our take on *Kung-Fu Master*, called *Dragon Punch*, pretty much 70% done. And the *Staff Of Karnath*-style game called *Demogorgon*; we made a start on that one; scrolling and maps are all in and you can walk around the map a fair bit. Trev has a fair few other ideas, but with another two coders in ICON64 there are enough game designs to go around!" Your impossible mission, should you choose to accept it, will begin at psytronik.itch.io Look out for a review in a future issue. </BODY>


Original Type
• Pauses
• Turns around
• Shoots
• Sprints
• Static
Floating Droid
• Moves left + right
• Sprints
• Turns around
• Pauses
Armoured Robot
• Pauses
• Sprints
• Pauses
• Turns
• Can't shoot
Wall Droid
• Moves up + down
• Shoots
• Pauses

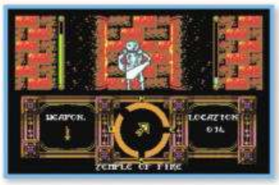
<!--- EARLY DESIGN DOCUMENTS FROM TREVOR, AS HE DEVISES NEW ROBOT TYPES. --->

<INTRO> MORE ICON64 GAMES TO CHECK OUT </INTRO>



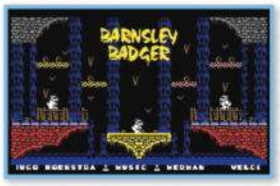
TERRESTRIAL

< Stu was responsible for this multi-part game inspired by *Beach-Head* and *Raid Over Moscow*, where you save your planet from alien invasion. />



ARGUS

< This impressive first-person dungeon crawler with a huge map, programmed by Achim Volkers, drew on the lesser-known Psygnosis title *Obitus*. />



BARNSLEY BADGER

< An early ICON64 platform game developed by Georg Rottensteiner to Trev's designs, with a somersaulting main character inspired by Monty Mole. />

NEWS BYTES

<INTRO> ALL THE LATEST NEWS, HANDILY ARRANGED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

< **Amiga:** Tukinem released *Wood Block Puzzle* and *AmiMineSweeper* recently and is now working on *Pinball Dreams 2*. There's more info over at tukinem.itch.io />

< **Amstrad CPC:** Mananuk released *Shadow Hunter*, where you shoot ghosts and trigger the trap to clear each level. Pay your own price at bit.ly/shadowhunter-cpc />

< **Atari:** AtariAge has more than 20 new games for sale across the 2600, 5200 and 7800 consoles. Check them out at atariage.com/store />

< **Atari XL/XE:** Multiplayer artillery game *Scorch* received a New Year update. Find out what's different by visiting bit.ly/scorch-atari />

< **BBC Micro:** Mark Moxon's excellent hacks now include Flicker-free Elite, Teletext Elite, and Elite Universe Editor (also available for C64). Head on over to bbcelite.com/hacks />

< **C64:** Donnie Russell II converted the ICOM point-and-click game *Castle Shadowgate* from the NES. Also, check out his version of the arcade classic *Venture*. Both can be found at bit.ly/shadowgate-c64 />

< **Dreamcast:** Ian Michael created a collection of emulated *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* games for Dreamcast players, including Mega Drive hack *Shredder's Re-Revenge*: get it at bit.ly/cowabunga-dreamcast />

< **KIM-1:** Vanport Media released a pack of games converted to run on this early machine. Visit bit.ly/games-kim1 for more info. />

< **Mega Drive:** Mangangateam.com are converting Capcom's scrolling beat-'em-up *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs*. Follow its progress at bit.ly/cadillacs-md />

< **PC:** The *Manic Destruction* beta lets Miner Willy explore familiar screens – armed with grenades to blow up the scenery. It can be found at bit.ly/manicd-beta />

< **PLUS/4:** TCFS updated his 1990 conversion to become *Wizard Of Wor Classic*. Find it at bit.ly/wow-plus4 />

< **ZX SPECTRUM:** Bytemaniacos.com is hosting its competitions for BASIC games and adventure games, with prizes for the top entries. Good luck to all that enter. />

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

CHAMPION CODER

MATT HUGHSON

<INTRO> FIND OUT HOW THE NES ASSEMBLY LINE PODCAST INSPIRED MATT TO CREATE HIS OWN NES GAMES </INTRO>

<INFO FROM: AMERICA WEBSITES: MHUGHSON.ITCH.IO, MATTHUGHSON.COM FORMAT: NES
PREVIOUS GAMES: FROM BELOW, WITCH 'N' WIZ, MINEKART MADNESS
WORKING ON: BLADES OF THE LOTUS (NES), RETROBREW (MAGAZINE) />

WHAT TOOLS DO YOU USE, MATT?

<I do almost all my coding in C – on top of some amazing libraries called Neslib and Nesdoug, and compile using the CC65 toolchain. I use an open-source sound engine called Famitone for music and sound playback. Music and sound are authored in Famitracker. Graphics are done using NEXXT and yy-chr. I do 99% of my work on PC, using Mesen to test, but I have an EverDrive PRO for testing on real hardware. />

DID YOU ENJOY HELPING ORGANISE THE NESDEV 2022 COMPO?

<Strange Brew Games did an amazing job single-handedly running this for many years. This year he wasn't able to do it, so a few of us got together to keep things running. Unlike most jams, all entries get put on a working NES cart and are gifted to the people who entered. The carts are then sold (as *Action 53*) and proceeds go towards cash prizes! />

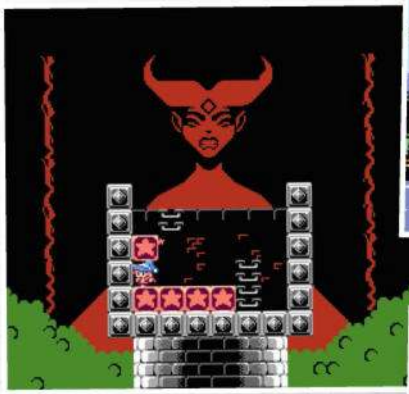
WHAT INSPIRED YOUR ENTRY, MINEKART MADNESS?

<I started brainstorming ideas for games I thought could be done in just a week or two. I considered if I could port *Donut Dodo* but even that was too big. *Minekart Madness* is mostly inspired by the minecart levels in *Donkey Kong Country*. I thought it was something I hadn't seen done in a coin-op-style arcade game. />

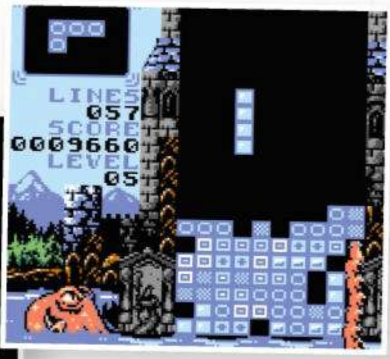
<!--- MATT'S RETROBREW MAGAZINE, "AIMS TO BE A SINGLE PLACE TO SHARE UPCOMING HOMEBREW RELEASES FOR ALL PLATFORMS." --->

WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT PROJECT?

<*Blades Of The Lotus* is an expansion on a game I released years ago called *Dash Maximus*. You attack enemies by 'dashing' into them. When you collide with an enemy or a wall, it throws you higher and allows you to reach areas that would otherwise be inaccessible. That side-scrolling action is broken up by a top-down overworld, similar to *Zelda 2*. You search for entrances to dungeons and find new abilities and items, which let you travel to new areas. I hope to have it at least in beta by the end of 2023. />



<!--- [NES] WITCH 'N' WIZ, AWARDED 87% IN RETRO GAMER, WILL BE GETTING A 16-BIT CONVERSION SOON. --->



<!--- [SUPER GAME BOY] THE KRAKEN ATTACKS FROM BELOW IN THE TIMED MODE OF THE GAME BOY CONVERSION. --->

SCORE
HISCORE
TIME

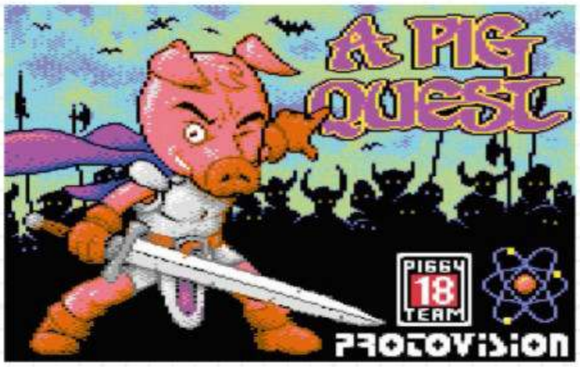
DATA BURST

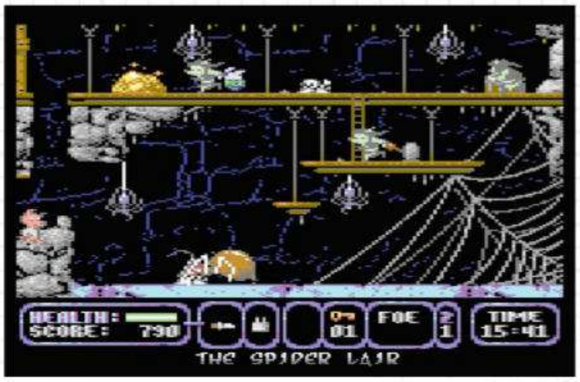
A PIG QUEST

<INFO BY: PIGGY 18 TEAM FOR PROTOVISION FORMAT: C64 CARTRIDGE PRICE: PHYSICAL CARTRIDGE FROM €45 (BOXED EDITION INCLUDES SOUNDTRACK CD), DIGITAL DOWNLOAD TBC
VISIT: BIT.LY/APIGQUEST />

<BODY> **In this porcine platform adventure game, Frank Further stumbles into a cave and uncovers an epic quest – he must find and restore the four Statues Of Wellness, rescuing Princess Porchetta on the way.** Frank starts his quest with no armour and a basic dagger but can find limited-time upgrades by using keys to unlock chests. Food and potions restore health, which is drained by enemies and hazards, while the status panel shows the remaining health of the foe Frank is currently facing. Getting past puzzles involves killing certain enemies, flicking switches, lighting fires, finding orbs, rescuing pigs and paying attention to the scrolling text's clues. The 1Mb cartridge allows for gorgeous backgrounds and detailed sprites from Alain Mauricet, with impressive large enemies and great animation. Fantastic tunes for each level from the Chiummo brothers are accompanied by some superb effects. Programmer Antonio Savona makes sure the controls are spot on and you feel like you are making progress every game you play. Frank's quest is split into five levels, offering plenty of variety, including a forest and a desert filled with ruins; once opened, the cartridge gives you permanent access to these later sections. Three difficulty levels are included and it presents a massive challenge. Currently planned for Valentine's Day, C64 fans will absolutely fall in love with this fantastic game. </BODY>

SCORE: 94%





NEW GAMES NEEDED

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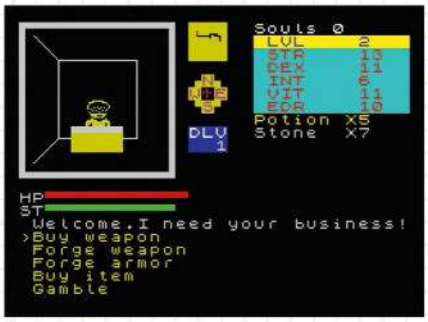
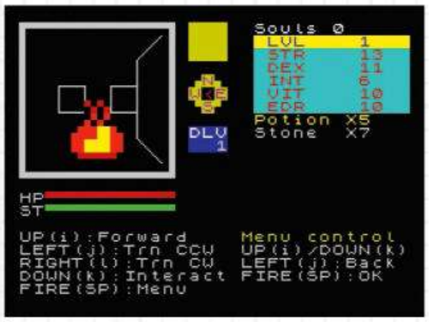


Souls 0
LVL 2
STR 13
DEX 11
INT 6
VIT 11
EDR 10
Potion X5
Stone X7
DLV 1
HP
ST
Welcome.I need your business!
>Buy weapon
Forge weapon
Forge armor
Buy item
Gamble



Souls 0
LVL 1
STR 13
DEX 11
INT 6
VIT 10
EDR 10
Potion X5
Stone X7
DLV 1
HP
ST
UP(i):Forward
LEFT(j):Trn CCW
RIGHT(l):Trn CW
DOWN(k):Interact
FIRE(SP):Menu

Menu control
UP(i)/DOWN(k)
LEFT(j):Back
FIRE(SP):OK

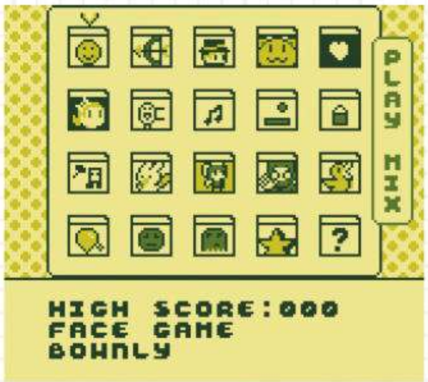
DUNGEON AND SOULS

Dungeon & Souls

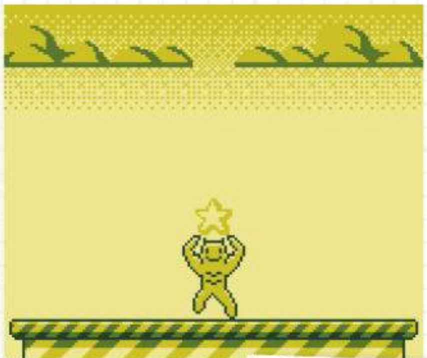
<INFO BY: HYE SSUN ENTERTAINMENT FORMAT: ZX SPECTRUM
PRICE: FREE VISIT: BIT.LY/DUNGEON-AND-SOULS />

<BODY> **It's 2099 and a rogue AI is waging war against the remaining humans on Earth in this impressive FPS for the hardware.** You know the drill – grab weapons, take down enemies and use the helpful AutoMap to navigate around 17 levels. In a neat touch, breakable walls can be shot open with the rocket launcher. The ray casting and 3D movement is smooth with animated wall textures and there's some impressive presentation including the introductory text which adds to the mood. There are numerous in-game 'titles' to be claimed, which all adds to the fun. It's just a shame there are only limited enemy types that move in predictable ways, although the large boss you face is something of a treat. It's all slickly programmed with outstanding music, but sadly does not last particularly long. </BODY>

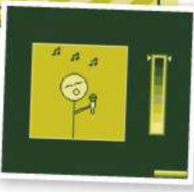
SCORE: **79%**



HIGH SCORE:000
FACE GAME
BOWNLY



MICROGAMES JAM PAK



<INFO BY: CURATED BY BOWNLY FORMAT: GAME BOY
PRICE: FREE VISIT: BIT.LY/MICROGAMES-GAMEBOY />

<BODY> **This cartridge collection based on a Game Boy game jam held in November 2022 will be very pleasing to *WarioWare* fans.** The main Play mode sees you face short games at random, which increase in speed and difficulty as you score increases. Fail, and your battery level drops (it's game over when it finally runs out). One thing we do like is Remix mode which lets you choose which of the 19 games are included. This successfully channels the spirit of *WarioWare* madness, with great music, graphics, and most importantly, some very playable minigames. </BODY>

SCORE: **81%**

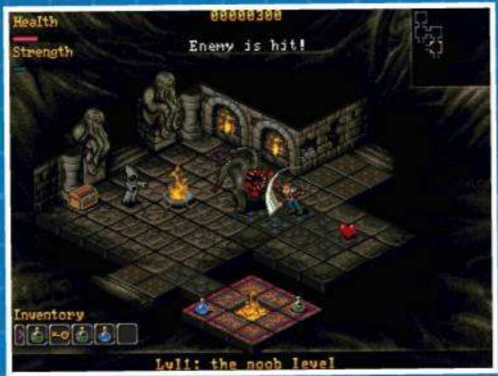
PROCESSING

<INTRO> BADGER PUNCH GAMES IS TRANSFORMING ROGUE64 INTO A NEW AMIGA ROGUELIKE </INTRO>

Roguecraft

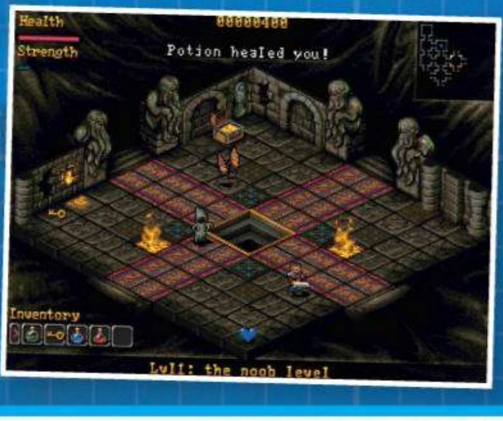
<BODY> **The C64 hit has been upgraded with a fresh look, as Ricki Sickenger tells us.** "We want to be able to utilise the Amiga graphics capabilities with *Roguecraft*. We settled on an isometric view because it allows us to show off more character and room detail. Isometric is also a new challenge for us and has been a nice learning experience both from a technical and graphical point of view. We will keep the funny monster names and add more! We try to add a bit of humour to our games when appropriate."

Due for release this May (at badgerpunch.itch.io/roguecraft) we were keen to know what additions it may have. "Our focus is on keeping the simple and fun gameplay from *Rogue64*. But when remaking the game for Amiga, we also want to add some of the features we had to cut from the C64 version," Ricki continues. "There will be more monsters, more potions, and more levels, and we also have a few new features that we can't talk about yet." </BODY>



Enemy is hit!

<!--- [AMIGA] THE CTHULHU MYTHOS BY HP LOVECRAFT HAS INSPIRED CERTAIN MONSTERS IN ROGUECRAFT. --->



Potion healed you!

HOT TOPIC

RETROBATES MULL OVER THE SCENE'S MOST INTRIGUING ISSUES

REVISITING RESIDENT EVIL

The team recall the highs and lows of Capcom's long-running series

DARRAN JONES

NICK THORPE

TIM EMPEY

You may have noticed that we quite like Capcom's *Resident Evil* series (we've done three covers after all). As the remake of *Resident Evil 4* prepares to drop we look back and have a chat about the popular survival horror series.

DARRAN
So chaps, what was your first experience of *Resident Evil*?

NICK
It was with the first game, which my friend's uncle had. I'd have been about ten at the time, so I spent the whole time watching it and doing a bad job of pretending not to be scared.

TIM
I hired it out of a video shop one time and… didn't really get on with it. I didn't quite get it at the time and kept dying because I kept running out of ammo. I did finish it on the GameCube many years later though.

DARRAN
You must have enjoyed it Tim as I remember you mentioning owning the second. Where do we think the series stands with regards to other survival horror releases of the time?

TIM
I loved the second one. Played it to death and eventually unlocked Tofu. Though my housemates hated that I'd take up the TV in the living room for upwards of three hours. Other survival horrors? I never got far in *Alone In The Dark* if that counts.

DARRAN
Personally I found those early games too hammy, which I know was the point. I thought *Silent Hill* did a far better job with horror at the time. It felt like the perfect companion to all the Japanese horrors that were popular back then.

NICK
I've always really liked the way that the first couple of *Resident Evil* games play out, as you gradually open up the mansion and the police station. I just find them extremely stressful to play, owing to a zombie phobia I picked up when someone decided to show an 18-rated zombie film at a Halloween party full of nine year olds. I tend to like pretty much every non-zombie survival horror game a lot more.

» [Wii] Early lightgun games like *Survivor* and *Dead Aim* are pretty weak, but *The Darkside Chronicles* does everything right.

> "I think the GameCube remake still holds up extremely well"
> NICK THORPE

TIM
Rarragh! They're going to eat your brain, Nick!

DARRAN
Steady on, Tim. I remember everyone in the press going mad for the pre-rendered backdrops. Was anyone else impressed with them then?

NICK
I wasn't so impressed with the first game, but the second looked really good and I think the GameCube remake still holds up extremely well.

DARRAN
I'd agree with that, Nick. I remember seeing the Gamecube remake at a trade show and being really impressed by it. Was it on your radar, Tim?

TIM
It wasn't, not until after I started on *Cube*. Then I got a GameCube and raided the games cupboard to play

» [PS4] Nick was full of praise for the remake of *Resident Evil 2*, even though he has a phobia of zombies.

it. And it was brilliant. And then something else brilliant happened – *Cube* got the exclusive review for the game that saved the GameCube, *Resident Evil 4*!

DARRAN
Oh man, *Resi 4* blew me away. We got an early note from Capcom while I was on *games™* with a list of everything that it would contain and we didn't believe it. When I saw it running for the first time I had to lift the GameCube up because I couldn't believe it was running on it. What were your impressions of it, Nick?

NICK
As a jaded GameCube owner, it felt like it was something to shout about – one of my friends got it and it was easy to tell that it was something special. I've not played much of it, but the emphasis on combat makes it more enjoyable for me. I like the *Chronicles* games on the Wii for the same reason.

DARRAN
I agree that the lightgun games on Wii are good, they're certainly more enjoyable than the earlier *Survivor* series. Did anyone enjoy *Code: Veronica*?

TIM
Played it on PS2 and tried it again on Xbox 360. I didn't like it much.

NICK
I was really thrown when I moved Claire and the camera followed her. I know that was the point of moving to 3D, but it felt very odd.

DARRAN
Yeah, that took a while to get used to. How about *Resi 5*? I quite enjoyed it at the time, but I remember Sheva's AI being particularly naff. It felt very hyped up at the time.

TIM
I actually enjoyed it a lot. It built on the shootiness of *Resi 4* and the unlockables were really cool – there's a triple-barrel shotgun for example. I've played it a lot and it's great fun in co-op.

DARRAN
I agree it's better in co-op. I'd also argue it's miles better than *6*, which is a complete trainwreck. Mercenaries was good in *Resi 5* as well.

TIM
Yeah I've only played through *Resi 6* once, that was more than enough for me.

DARRAN
Resi 7 was good. I completed it in VR and it felt like a real return to form. *Village* is decent, but not up to the same standard, while *Resi 4 VR* was the absolute nuts. Will the incoming remake be able to capture the magic of the original?

TIM
I hope so, it'll be the fifth system I've owned it on…

NICK
If the *Resident Evil 2* remake is anything to go by, definitely. Then again, if the *Resident Evil 3* remake is anything to go by, probably not. ✱

» [PS4] Darran reviewed *Resident Evil 7 Biohazard* at work and his shrieks of fear could be heard throughout the office.

» [PlayStation] *Resident Evil 2* remains an excellent game, whether you play the original or its remake.

Ashley
Leon
» [PC] *Resident Evil 4* has had countless ports and updates, even appearing on iOS and the ill-fated Zeebo.

» [PlayStation] The static camera angles and continuous jump scares of *Resident Evil* certainly kept you on your toes.

READERS REACT

What parts of the Resi series do readers remember?

Martin S
The first game – it has to be the walking down the corridor and the dogs jumping through the window!

Retrofury
Definitely the first time I saw the Licker hanging from the ceiling in *Resident Evil 2*, blood dripping from its mouth.

FBSteve
The transformation moments in the original *Resident Evil 2* just hold a strong nostalgic body horror loving part of my heart. Watching someone go from human to a many-clawed hell beast and finally a blob just hits that horror note for me.

Jason
The first game when you go to leave the mansion as soon as the game gives you control. Literally made me jump out of my seat the first time.

Britt Zank
It's not exciting, but that first time the zombie turns and you see that look as a kid in 1996. You knew you were in for a game like you've never experienced before.

James Harvey
The Licker crawling past the window. Absolutely terrifying.

Stev3l Gaming
A million times, the moment when Nemesis bursts through the window in the PS1/GC versions of *Resident Evil 3*. The tension builds so well when you're heading down the stairs to the moment he smashes through – truly terrifying especially given the claustrophobic corridor you're in.

Sam Bird
All of Steve Burnside's incredible dialogue in *Code: Veronica*.

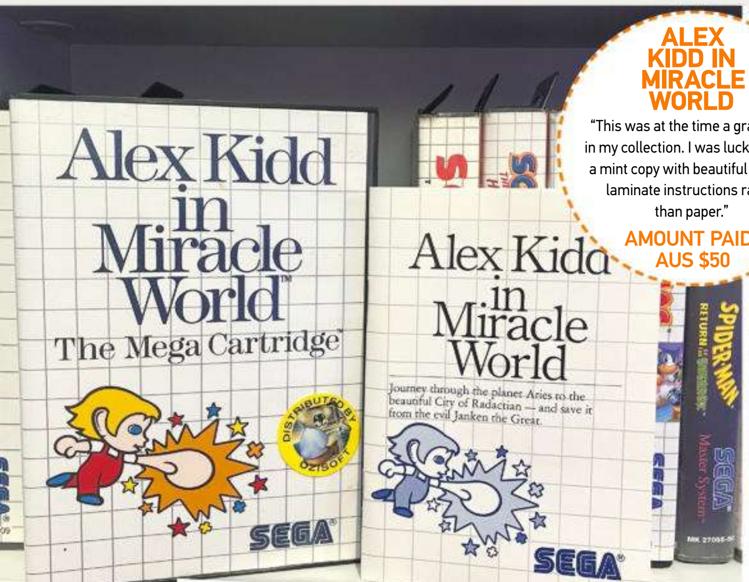
NukaClipse
Hearing the sounds of the zombie dog's nails on the ground as it inches its way towards you offscreen. Spooky.

GC
Entering the Spencer mansion on the remake of the original game is a moment yet to be topped for me. It truly felt like you were jumping into a survival horror experience.

Martin Whitehouse
That first moment when your character gazes up at the Licker and you can feel that fear with them. Their leap is arguably worse than the famed Hunters as well!

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

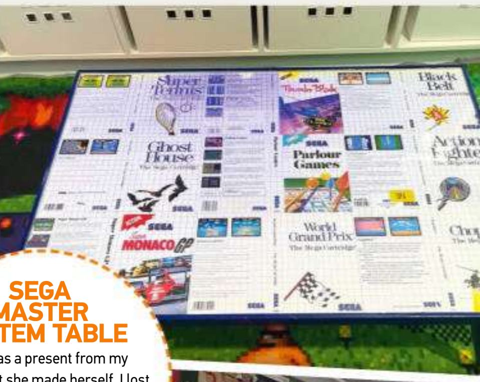
READERS TAKE US THROUGH **THE RETRO KEYHOLE**



ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD

"This was at the time a grail item in my collection. I was lucky to find a mint copy with beautiful Ozisoft laminate instructions rather than paper."

AMOUNT PAID: AUS $50



SEGA MASTER SYSTEM TABLE

"This was a present from my mother that she made herself. I lost her last year so this is one of my treasured items in the room."

AMOUNT PAID: PRICELESS

MASTERING THE MASTER SYSTEM

Our latest collector has a thing for Sega's 8-bit console

BIO

NAME:
Garth Coyle

LOCATION:
Brisbane, Australia

ESTIMATED VALUE OF COLLECTION:
AUS $35,000

FAVOURITE SYSTEM:
Master system

FAVOURITE GAME:
ToeJam & Earl

YOUTUBE:
@den_den_boys

Garth Coyle has always been into his gaming, but his collecting really started during the last decade. "I got serious about collecting around ten years ago when I completed university," he tells us.

Gaze at the images of Garth's games room (which regularly appears on his YouTube channel The Den Den Boys he hosts with his friend Vaughan) and you'll realise that there's one console in particular he's quite serious about. "The Master system was big here in Australia and was the first console I ever owned," Garth says. "It has so many classic games like *Phantasy Star*, *Alex Kidd* and *Master Of Darkness*. I personally think the Master System was the superior console versus the NES."

With such a love for Sega's 8-bit console you won't be surprised to learn that Garth is going for a complete collection. "I have at last check, some 257 games," he proudly says. "The goal is to collect all of the PAL releases, excluding those released in Brazil. I have around 20 games left to complete the set and some of those command a decent price like *Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine* and *Masters Of Combat*."

Garth's love of all things Sega extends to other consoles as well, although he admits to us that it is partly due to circumstance. "Back in the Nineties you were either a Sega kid or a Nintendo kid. Because I started with Sega I guess I just became team Sega."

Despite a love for Sega, Garth still has plenty of other gaming interests and has a nice collection of TVs to play them on – although he admits it's something his partner isn't too keen on. "I always love playing the era of each console on the respective era TV," he explains. "I think it's cool to play my retro games just as they would have been in their day."

Televisions aren't the only hardware Garth owns and he's also acquired two gorgeous arcade cabs, with the Neo Geo cabinet being a particular source of pride. "I had been in contact on Marketplace with the seller of the cabinet for nearly two years and he kept changing his mind about selling it," Garth says. "Finally, he messaged me out of nowhere asking if I was still interested. I snapped it up before he changed his mind again." Aside from games Garth also collects toys, including classics from McDonald's. "I have always loved the McDonald's toys from my childhood, especially the Changeables, but weirdly enough I don't like McDonald's food," he admits. "My brother loved it though and when he got the meals I kept the toys. A lot of my collection are my originals from back in the day."

So when he's not looking for Master System games and McDonald's toys what advice would Garth offer to budding collectors? "I think it would be to collect what you love and not feel like you have to own everything right away," he offers, admitting that it's now a tough market to get into. "Unfortunately, I think games have become a way for a lot of flippers and resellers to make money not because they are collectors and that's hard to take. I collect because I want to play the games and because I have a love and respect for games, not because I want to make a dollar." *

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

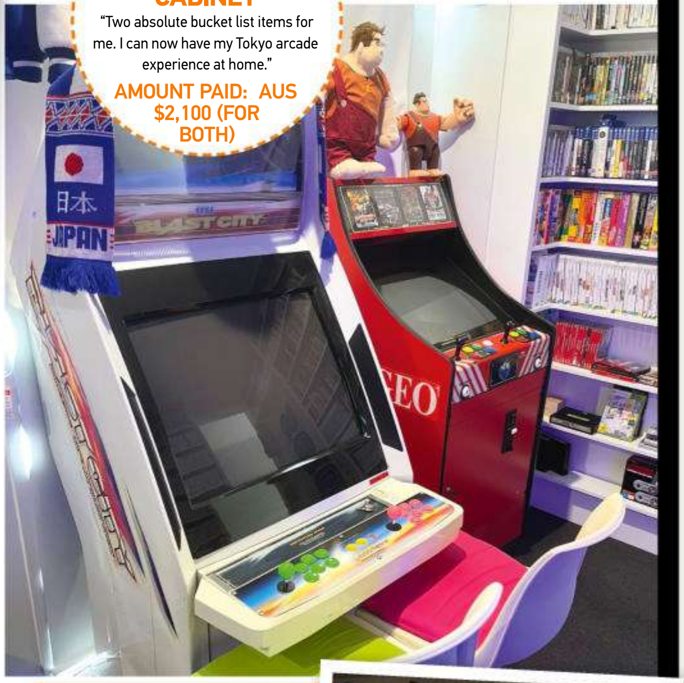
RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

THE カメラマン
～激写ボーイ おまけ付～
SIMPLE 1500シリーズ® Vol.94

THE SIMPLE SERIES VOLUME 94: CAMERAMAN

"This was another grail item I had been looking for on my many trips to Japan. A re-release of *Gekisha Boy + Added Level*. Stoked to finally find it."

AMOUNT PAID: AUS $50



NEO GEO 4-SLOT CABINET AND BLAST CITY CABINET

"Two absolute bucket list items for me. I can now have my Tokyo arcade experience at home."

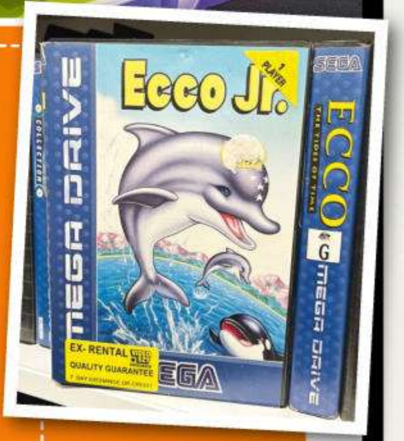
AMOUNT PAID: AUS $2,100 (FOR BOTH)

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

ECCO JR

■ "This game was a real find on one of my game hunting trips at a local market. I got it cheap and love the nostalgia of the old video-store stickers."

PAID: AUS $15



BARGAIN HUNT

Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER GAME

RESIDENT EVIL 4

PAL GameCube copies are surprisingly cheap and can be found for around **£12.** PS2 steelbooks sell for as much as **£30,** while the excellent Wii edition shouldn't cost you more than a fiver.

SPACE HARRIER 3-D

Sega's 3D-focussed shooter is going up in price now. The last UK copy we saw sold for **£44** complete, so pat yourself on the back if you can get it for a lower price.

JET BIKE SIMULATOR

Five English pounds should be enough to procure an Amstrad version of *Jet Bike Simulator*, although one sold recently for **£11.99.**

SHINING FORCE

There are lots of modern ways to enjoy Sega's game now, but if you want the original PAL Mega Drive release you'll need to dig deep as it goes between **£45** and **£215** depending on how complete it is.

STUNT CAR RACER

If you want the Kixx variant of this C64 classic you'll be looking at spending up to a tenner for it. If you want the original big box variant it's going to cost at least **£50.**

LIONHEART

This highly acclaimed Amiga game now fetches a pretty penny, so if you can find it for under **£50** consider yourself lucky. **£75** seems to be the going rate at the moment.

PURE

Luckily, this excellent arcade racer is still relatively cheap. Xbox 360 copies are under a fiver and you can get the PS3 version for under a tenner.

SENGOKU BLADE

As Darran has mentioned elsewhere, this Saturn arcade conversion is rising steadily in price and now fetches between **£110** and **£190.** If that's a little too steep you'll find the Switch and PS4 Psikyo collections a far cheaper alternative. The digital version (look for *Tengai*) is roughly **£6.99** on most online stores.

NINTENDO64
GOLDENEYE 007
PAL VERSION

HOW MUCH?!

GOLDENEYE 007

A **£75** starting bid saw 14 bidders attempting to win a mint (non-graded) sealed copy of Rare's hit FPS. The winner paid **£1,480,** the kicker? It still had the original **£49.99** price tag on it. Ouch!

Prices correct at time of print

MY RETRO LIFE

PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT OUR **SHARED PASSION**

UNEARTHING SOME GEMS

David Crookes on unlocking the secrets of his floppy-disk collection

In the Nineties, when 3-inch disks became harder and more expensive to buy, I purchased a 3.5-inch disk drive for my Amstrad CPC 6128. As a consequence, most of my public-domain software and homebrew purchases ended up on 3.5-inch floppies but the drive went missing many years ago and merely reading about the process of fitting another (bit.ly/cpcfloppy) has proven enough to stick that idea on the back burner.

This has meant that a lot of 3.5-inch disks have been sitting in boxes on my shelves. For the most part, it hasn't bothered me. You can go online and download stuff for use in emulators these days. But, in the back of my mind, I've wondered, "What if?" What if there are games on those disks that no one else has? What if I've been sitting on software that someone has been desperate to get their hands on all of these years?

Late last year, I was writing my retro computing column for our sister magazine, *PC Pro*, when I came across an exciting device which, to my shame, I'd never heard of before. Called KryoFlux and developed by the Software Preservation Society, it's a floppy-disk controller card that allows a PC or Mac to read disks created for use with a host of retro computers. It lets you archive games and files stored on fast-deteriorating floppies and its creators have strong retro roots.

> "I'd inadvertently opened a small treasure chest"
>
> DAVID CROOKES

KryoFlux's CEO Christian Bartsch, for instance, used to work for Cachet Software, developers of a little-known disk-copying tool called X-Copy on the Amiga. Its chief technology officer István Fábián designed *Abandoned Places* for the same computer. The more I delved, the more it seemed like an opportunity to view my disks again while being able to keep a copy on my Mac for use in an emulator.

When the device arrived, it looked a tad daunting but essentially it entailed inserting a bunch of wires, connecting a disk drive – whether one for 8-inch, 3.5-inch, 5.25-inch or 3-inch floppies – firing up some software and inserting a disk. KryoFlux sent a 3.5-inch drive so my main task was deciding whether to be brave and use the software's command line interface, tapping in the instructions needed to get things whirring, recognising and archiving, or else opt for the menu-driven Disk Tool Console GUI with its big Start button. I, of course, went for the latter.

It was a joy to watch as colourful blocks filled a grid and raw dumps were saved to my Mac. I then had to convert those dumps into DSK images using a free tool called HxC Floppy Emulator but, lo and behold, memories of past gems came flooding back.

I rediscovered Jeroen Erkens' mazey *Balldozer* from 1991 and the *Pac-Man* clone *Chomper* by Paul Stanley. There was a curious but clunky French title with demo-like effects called *Megamix* and the absolutely stunning *Axys: The Last Battle* which was originally a type-in published in French magazine *CPC Infos*. But then I spotted a disk with a label reading Crystal X – the name of a software company selling games by homebrewer Angela Swinbourne. Each title sold for between £1.50 and £6.49 and one of them – a detailed strategy game involving aliens called *Stellar Outpost* – was given a full-page review and a score of 85% in *Amstrad Action*. Alas, this game was not on my disk but other Crystal X games were. I was able to play the strategy titles *Cloaker* and *Pacifist*, the maze-like action game Mantis and a space-based tug-of-war game called *PZP*.

None of those four games – all of which were created in the early Nineties – are available to download online and they simply seem to have been lost to time (you can, however, find *Stellar Outpost*)! Upon realising this, I felt a mix of sadness, regret and relief: sad that people haven't been playing these games, regret that I've sat on them for so long and relief that I'd found them. I'd inadvertently opened a small treasure chest.

More than that, I've been able to shed light on Angela's games – work that, I can only presume, has been overlooked for more than 30 years! Of course, my journey is not going to stop here. I'm going to continue using the KryoFlux to plough through many more disks across all machines in the hope of unearthing even more. ✱

FIND THESE!

MY FAVOURITE AMSTRAD CPC PUBLIC-DOMAIN GAMES

CROCO MAGNETO

Long considered a CPC classic, this addictive game simply tasks you with collecting 92 jewels while avoiding radioactive nasties.

POWER TETRIS

Connect two CPCs together and four players can compete against each other in what is widely acclaimed as the Amstrad's best *Tetris* clone.

LES MINGS

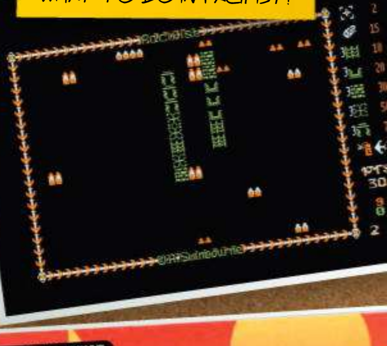
No prizes for guessing which game this clone was based on, albeit with fewer options and only one character to save.

EVE OF SHADOWS

With superb Mode 0 graphics and great storytelling, Rob Buckley's text-based adventure game could easily have been a commercial release.

SPOTS

This colourful strategic board game allows up to four players to compete against each other to take over as many squares as possible.

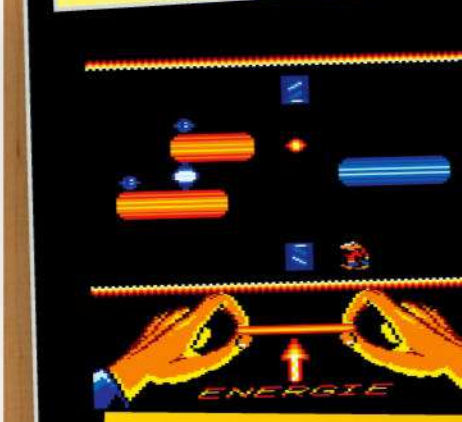


[AMSTRAD CPC] WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS, IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO WORK OUT WHAT TO DO IN PACIFIST!

GAME REVIEW

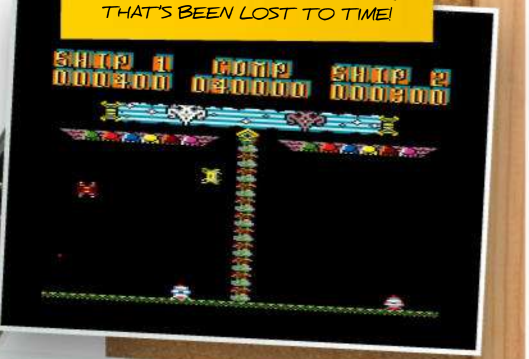
Stellar Outpos

THIS FULL-PAGE REVIEW OF STELLAR OUTPOST IN AMSTRAD ACTION SHOWS THE QUALITY OF SOME CRYSTAL X GAMES!

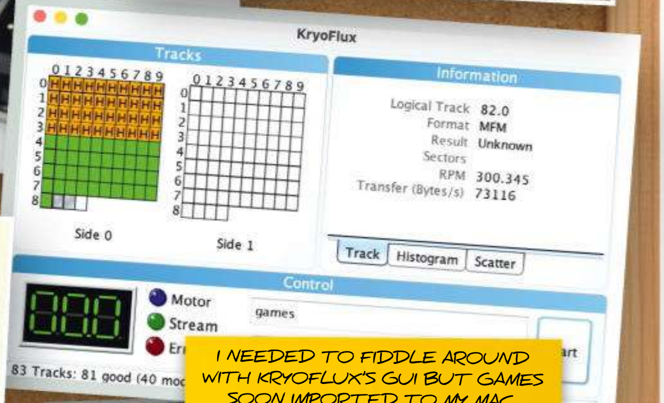


[AMSTRAD CPC] I ALSO REDISCOVERED THE QUIRKY FREN GAME MEGAMIX FROM 1992.

THE KRYOFLUX ARRIVES AS A BARE-BONES DEVICE READY TO BE CONNECTED TO A DISK DRIVE.



[AMSTRAD CPC] PZP IS A FUN TWO-PLAYER GAME OF TUG-OF-WAR THAT'S BEEN LOST TO TIME!

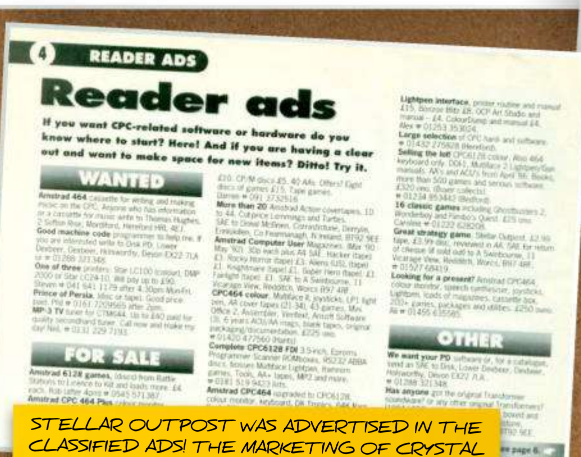


Logical Track 82.0
Format MFM
Result Unknown
Sectors
RPM 300.345
Transfer (Bytes/s) 73116

games

83 Tracks: 81 good (40 moc

I NEEDED TO FIDDLE AROUND WITH KRYOFLUX'S GUI BUT GAMES SOON IMPORTED TO MY MAC.



4 READER ADS

Reader ads

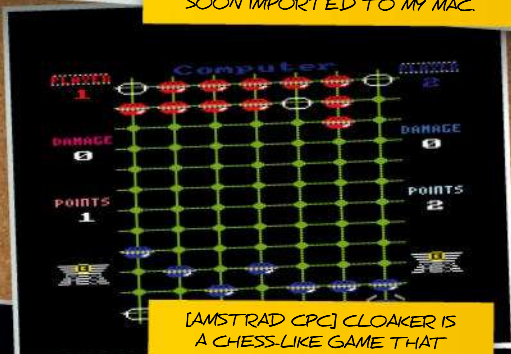
If you want CPC-related software or hardware do you know where to start? Here! And if you are having a clear out and want to make space for new items? Ditto! Try it.

WANTED

FOR SALE

OTHER

STELLAR OUTPOST WAS ADVERTISED IN THE CLASSIFIED ADS! THE MARKETING OF CRYSTAL X SOFTWARE'S GAMES WAS HANDED TO WOW SOFTWARE IN 1995.



[AMSTRAD CPC] CLOAKER IS A CHESS-LIKE GAME THAT REQUIRES A BIT OF THOUGHT!

SCORE
0009
TAM
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VIE
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MECANIX

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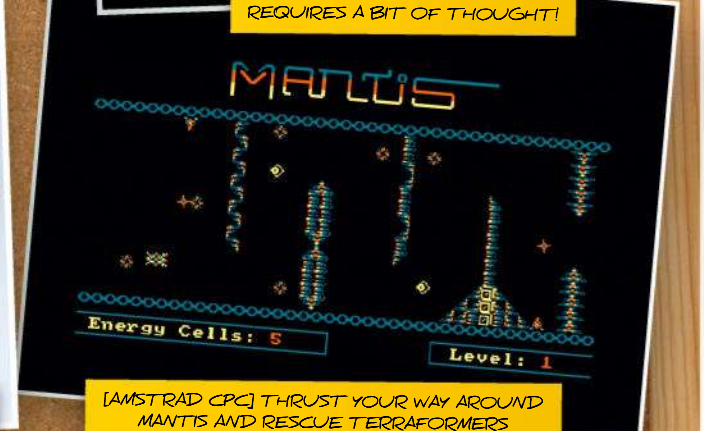
MITSUMI
Crystal X Games

AN OLD 3.5-INCH DRIVE FROM A PC IS HOOKED UP TO THE KRYOFLUX. WHAT GOODIES AWAIT?



[AMSTRAD CPC] THRUST YOUR WAY AROUND MANTIS AND RESCUE TERRAFORMERS TRAPPED UNDERGROUND.

LOST AND FOUND

What's your biggest retro-related surprise?

Matt Sephton

In 2012 I found a stack of big box LucasArts adventure games in a charity shop. All for PC, except for Amiga *Monkey Island 2* which contained old magazine cutouts. Some of the PC games had FAQ printouts from USENET around the time of release.

Simon Boggy Burton

When moving house I found a box full of Mega Drives, loads of power packs, RF leads and controllers. No idea I had it or where it came from.

VideoGameEsoterica

Getting a Neo Geo prototype in a field under a tree on a pallet that had been forgotten about for decades (true story).

Paul Darbyshire

In 2005, after my friend's uncle sadly died, we found a big box copy of *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* for Amiga and a Mega Drive II while clearing his house. I got to keep them both…

Luke Syred

A *Sonic The Hedgehog 2* Mega Drive cartridge set into a glass coffee table as a decoration.

Retro101.co.uk

I found a copy of *Alfred Chicken* on the NES, a game I'd been looking for a long time, just on a shop shelf in a shop in Truro. It wasn't even a second-hand shop.

Snoogans

My dad finding our long-lost Mega Drive collection that included: *Pocahontas*, *Smurfs Travel The World*, *Maui Mallard* and… *Spider-Man/Venom: Separation Anxiety*!

Game Center Jun

Buying arcade machines and finding three newborn kittens inside!

nivrig

I found an intact Apple IIe and floppy drive (still attached!) in a skip.

FM-Rad1o

Found all my Game Boy boxes in a cupboard. I long thought that they'd been tossed but nope, there they were with inserts, instructions and all in pristine condition.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA – **TWITTER.COM/RETROGAMER_MAG**

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a spanking copy of one of our classic retro books. Good luck everyone!

THE NES BOOK

» [GameCube] Democracy says it's the best GameCube game ever. But what do voters know, eh?

» [GameCube] It's rather timely that *Metroid Prime* has come up now, given the Switch remaster's recent release.

STAR LETTER

MEAN MEME MACHINE

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I've been quite annoyed recently and it's all because of *Zero Wing*. Well, not *Zero Wing* but the people talking about it. The arcade version has been released on PC and I'm fed up of people moaning that it doesn't have the, "All your base," quote, when it was never in that version in the first place. It's not that I don't find it funny, I just get annoyed that a genuinely decent game is completely overshadowed by one meme that has been beaten half to death over the last 20 years.

1 P
HI-SCORE
2 P
INSERT COIN

» [Arcade] We considered putting the infamous image here, but that made us feel mean.

» [PS3] "Hey look, no crabs!" is a phrase you should never be excited to say.

I get why that would happen to rubbish games like the *Zelda* CD-i games, but I can't think of any other games that are actually worthwhile that get this treatment. Am I missing something, or is *Zero Wing* really alone in this regard?
John Donovan

That's a good question, John. It's not common, but it does happen – for example, the *Dead Or Alive* games have sometimes been at the forefront of the fighting genre, but to some people they'll always just be the fighting games with jiggle physics. *Genji: Days Of The Blade* isn't dreadful, but it will forever be the game that spawned the giant enemy crab meme, and just about all discussion of *Earthbound* outside of fan circles tends to concern the creepy final boss fight against Giygas.

BEST OF THE BOX

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I am Dylan, a 15 year old who lives in the US. I have been an avid reader of your magazine since 2019. I always enjoy reading your top 25 games for a console articles and for a future issue, I thought it would be amazing to see a top 25 games feature for the Nintendo GameCube.
Thank you.
Dylan

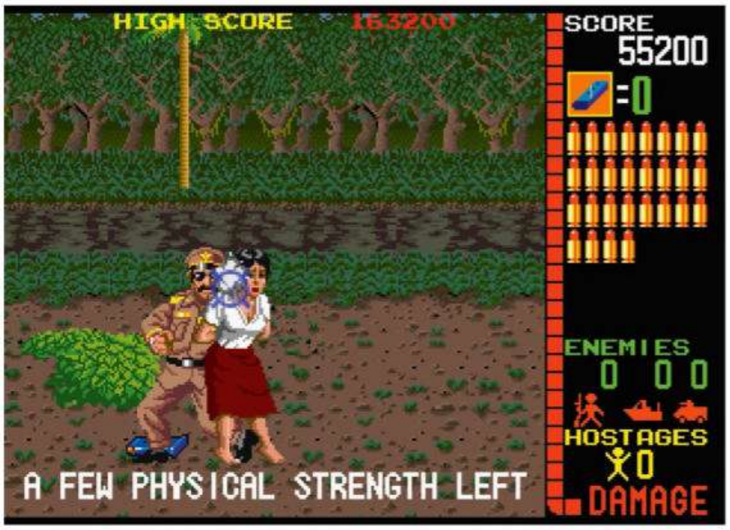
We also thought that, so we ran that very feature in issue 233 last year, Dylan. *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker* took the top spot, with *Resident Evil 4* and *Metroid Prime* taking second and third respectively.

MARK OF THE WOLF

Hi **Retro Gamer**,
I was perusing the pages of issue 239 and to my delight I had a general pointing a gun directly at me whilst holding a hostage. Of course, I'm talking about *Operation Wolf*, the classic arcade shoot-'em-up.

Seeing those images again immediately transported me back to the late-Eighties. Every Friday night I used to go out with my mates down to our local. The *Wolf* used to lurk in the shadows tempting us to play with its repeating demos and seductive flashing "Insert coins to start" text. The moment I wrapped my fingers around the Uzi, I was hooked. We all became completely obsessed with it, pushing each other to go further and complete the levels and cursing each other when we hit a nurse stretcher bearer, losing precious energy.

After drinking copious amounts of alcohol we would pump endless pound coins into that greedy machine. Cigarettes dangling from our mouths with gun in hand, we thought our aim was improving with every passing beer. When I think about how much we spent



» [Arcade] Hey look, here's that nostalgic image again. Don't say we never do anything for you.

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on that game, we probably could have bought one.

Anyway, thanks so much for bringing those memories back. My one regret was we never managed to complete it.

Nick

We're glad to have brought back such fond memories, Nick. It's one of the things we miss about pubs of the past – fruit machines and quiz machines can be fun in their own way, but we still think videogames should have a place in drinking establishments.

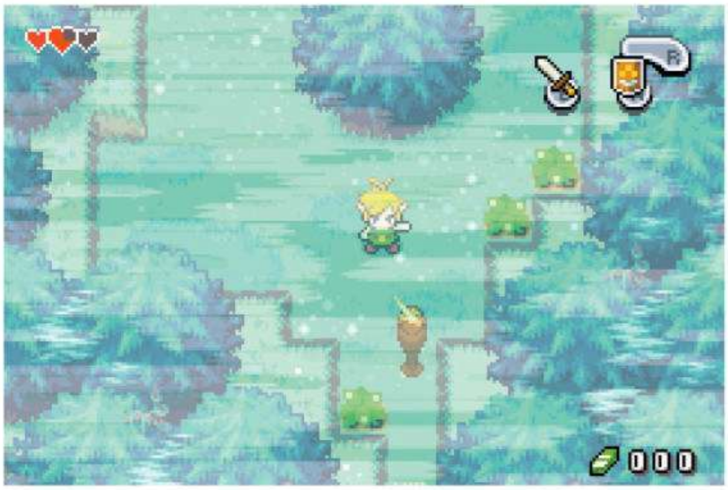
LOVE LOST

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

This is a cautionary tale. I recently traded in a few retro games in CEX, to fund the purchase of a couple of new guitar pedals. One of the games was a mint copy of *The Minish Cap* for GBA, and as I was waiting for it to be valued, I was looking at the game box, wondering if I was making the right decision. For the next few days my mind kept going back to that moment and even now, a few months later, I still regret the sale. So, always be 100% sure if you're selling on any of your collection because that doubt can gnaw away at you.

Tom Wilcox

Sorry to hear that Tom, it's never fun to end up missing something you've parted with. For readers looking to avoid similar regrets, one thing we like to do is spend an hour playing a game before making the decision on whether or not to sell it. That's usually enough time for us to decide if we're truly likely to revisit a game.



» [Game Boy Advance] Hopefully, Tom will enjoy the guitar pedals he traded *The Minish Cap* in for.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Disaster Report

This month hasn't been the luckiest for the team, as we've had our struggles with emergencies. Nick had to evacuate his flat for a legitimate fire alarm, but thankfully the two fire engines that showed up were more than was needed for what turned out to be a minor incident. Unfortunately, Darran didn't get off so lightly – he woke up to a flooded conservatory about a week later, which has likely destroyed his Wii U controller and a rug.

Your say

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What are your favourite Resident Evil 4 moments?

Michael Burnside

That first encounter in the village, when you see what they did to one of the policemen. Then they start coming after you…

Pedro G

The first moment El Gigante appears on the screen is simply unforgettable!

BitSelector

I was impressed by how well the Wii port was made. They had improved a really good game in an unexpected way. The pointer controls feel so natural in it, like the game was made with them in mind. That version is my way to enjoy this game.

Can of Retro

When the dog you rescue comes to aid you in the El Gigante fight is one of the most iconic *Resident Evil* moments for me.

Daniel Betts

The slow build in tension and horror in the opening, from leaving the police car up to the frantic struggle for survival in the village and back to the calm that follows, was handled really well.

PixelPauer

The first time being beheaded by Dr Salvador was pretty shocking (and also damn cool at the same time)!

Kurt Machin

"Where's everyone going? Bingo?" [Nice Leon quote - Ed]

Simbabbad

My favourite moment was the first time I killed someone in the village itself. You're led to a woman working who has her back turned on you, and I remembered hesitating, she seemed peaceful. She eventually spotted me, and soon all the village was after me. They looked real.

Adriano Gazza

Any time the Merchant says, "Not enough cash, stranger!"

Tom Clark

The first encounter with Chainsaw Man and the siege of the cabin are iconic moments, but for me the best bit is when you realise that you can preemptively piss off the lake monster for an instant (and hilarious) game over.

retro GAMER

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9
16
00:08.30
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--:--.--
Best

» RETROREVIVAL

Pure

THRILLS AND SPILLS

» XBOX 360 » 2008 » BLACK ROCK STUDIO

I've never been one for simulations, particularly when it comes to racing games. Give me an arcade racer though and I'm all over it. Give me one as fun as *Pure* and I'll be a very happy chappy indeed.

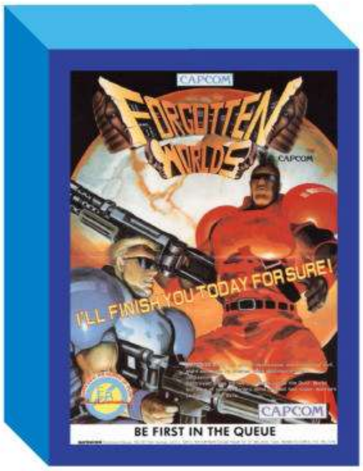
Pure really is a fantastic arcade racer and it's one that I feel simply doesn't get anywhere near the acclaim or adulation it deserves. The penultimate game by Black Rock Studio before it was shut down by Disney Interactive Studios in 2011, *Pure* is a wonderfully kinetic racer that's high on thrills and spills, and rewards those who are prepared to push themselves and their on-screen quad-bikes to the absolute limit.

Where *Pure* excels is in its over-the-top stunts and its clever gameplay mechanics. Preloading requires you to push down, then forwards on the left stick to get insane air, often over gut-churning drops. Once airborne, you can pull off tricks by pressing A and holding a specific direction. Time it correctly and your Thrill Bar will increase, which will give you access to better and more outlandish stunts that are found on the B, Y and bumper buttons.

Alternatively you can simply press X to give yourself a significant boost that will last until your Thrill Bar depletes. It's a great system that constantly presents you with on-the-fly dilemmas as you race your 15 opponents – do you constantly trick so you can go flat out on the final lap, or do you take a more measured approach. There's no wrong answer in *Pure*, only choice and it's brilliant.

Sure the gnarly voice-overs from the racers gets tedious, but the well-designed courses, challenging AI, race variety, excellent vehicle physics, solid customisation and boisterous soundtrack will keep you coming back for more. If only we still got arcade racers like this today. ✱

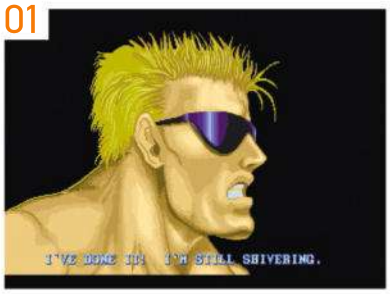
ENDGAME


CAPCOM
FORGOTTEN WORLDS
CAPCOM
I'LL FINISH YOU TODAY FOR SURE!
CAPCOM
BE FIRST IN THE QUEUE

FORGOTTEN WORLDS

» Here's a question for you – if these worlds have been forgotten, what are these two super soldiers doing trying to save them? It doesn't make a lot of sense, but they're going to do it anyway, so we suppose the best thing to do is skip to the end to find out what happens when they achieve their goal.

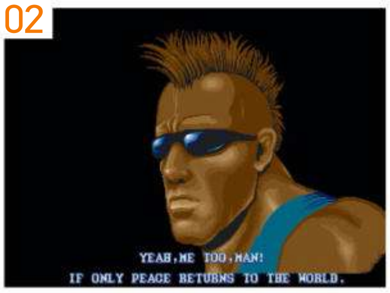
01



I'VE DONE IT! I'M STILL SHIVERING.

» Player one remarks on the fact that he's still shivering. It just goes to show that you can be strong enough to defeat evil, while still being vain enough to do so shirtless. Honestly, heroes these days, eh?

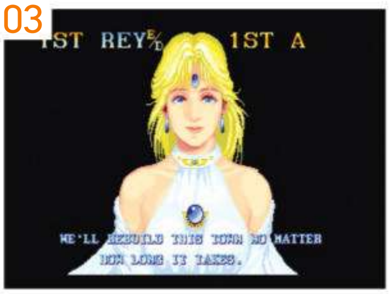
02



YEAH,ME TOO,MAN!
IF ONLY PEACE RETURNS TO THE WORLD.

» Player two appears to be wearing slightly more clothing, but still feels the same. At least he appears to be at least a little bit concerned about the fate of the world they've spent nine stages saving.

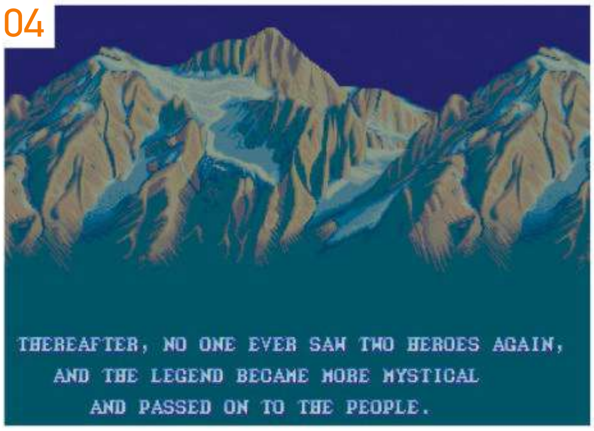
03



WE'LL REBUILD THIS TOWN NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES.

» Sylphie pledges to rebuild the town, and let's be honest, if anyone can do that it's her. She's managed to make her shop appear in the most unlikely of places throughout the game, despite all of the danger.

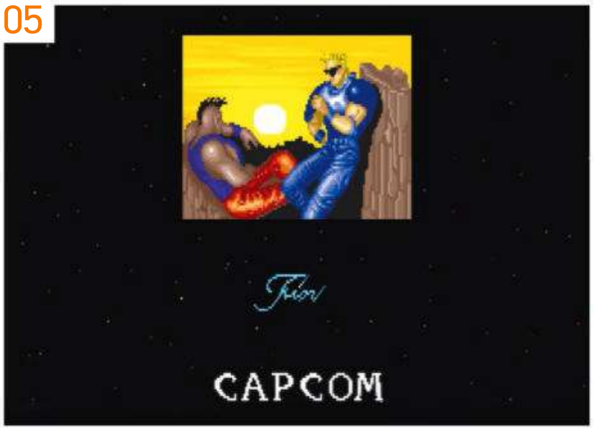
04



THEREAFTER, NO ONE EVER SAW TWO HEROES AGAIN,
AND THE LEGEND BECAME MORE MYSTICAL
AND PASSED ON TO THE PEOPLE.

» The epilogue tells us that the heroes were never seen again, which we suppose makes sense – the flyer tells us that "aura of people's angry mind created two super warriors to fight against evils," and there's no evil left to make people angry.

05



» We do at least get a sense of what happened to them afterwards, thanks to this one final image. It seems that they not only found some clothes, but they ended up forming a band together. Here they are, ready to drop the hottest album of the Nineties.

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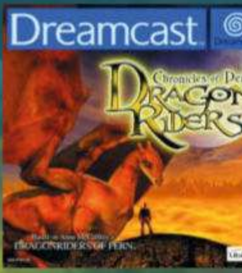
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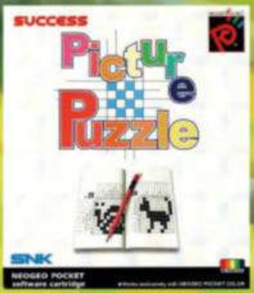
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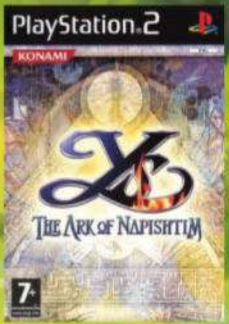
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THE MINI RESIDENT EVIL COMPANION

HORROR TAKES SHAPE

They say horror has many faces and that's certainly true of Capcom's long-running series. Boldly inviting you to "Enter the world of survival horror", Capcoms' first *Resident Evil* game became a huge success on Sony's PlayStation and highlighted just how far the medium was progressing. Known as *Biohazard* in Japan (the series' convoluted plot revolves around the T-Virus), it spawned several sequels and became synonymous with survival horror in the process.

Just as the T-Virus would mutate the series' antagonists into ever-more grotesque forms, so too would the series change, first with the groundbreaking *Resident Evil 4*, then later with the first-person perspective of *Resident Evil 7*. Just like the residents of Spencer Mansion, Capcom would conduct its own experiments, letting the mainline series shoot off into numerous different genres – from lightgun games to chaotic multiplayer shooters – with varying degrees of success.

The series has certainly focussed more on action in the last decade of its life, but you'll still find the games packed with plenty of horrific moments, while ambitious remakes of *Resident Evil 2* and the VR version of *Resident Evil 4* proves that Capcom still knows how to deliver genuine scares. So join Nick and myself as we gingerly trudge through the history of one of gaming's most revered series. Wish us luck!

8
You've obtained
Rusted Key.

ARUKAS
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Rebecca
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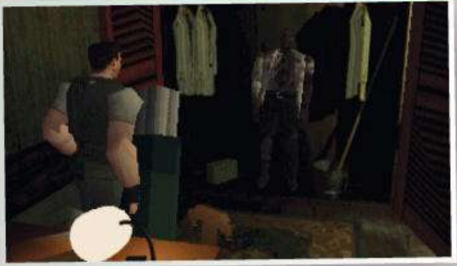
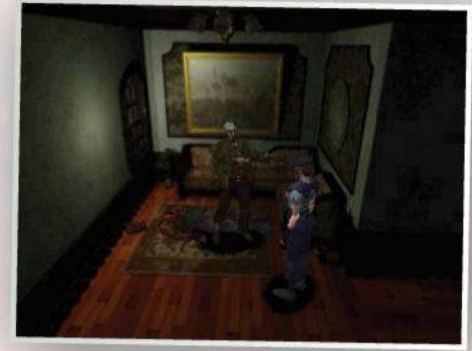
HORROR BEGINS HERE

RESIDENT EVIL

PLAYSTATION, VARIOUS, 1996

Even though many horror games came before it, many gamers consider the original *Resident Evil* to be the starting point of the survival horror genre. *Resident Evil* not only introduced some of the franchise's most memorable characters (Chris Redfield, Jill Valentine and Albert Wesker) but also cemented many of the mechanics that would become integral to the series for years to come. Tank-like controls, hilariously silly dialogue, careful item management, limited resources, A-to-B puzzles and tense pacing all combined to deliver a satisfyingly mature game that really helped Sony's console stand apart from the crowd.





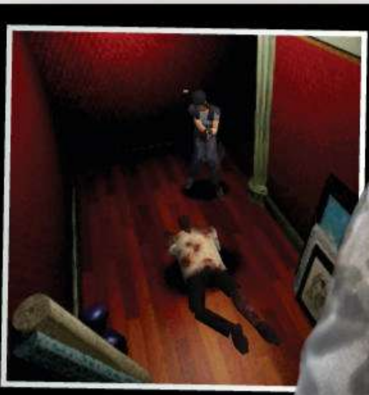
The pre-rendered visuals created a creepily atmospheric vibe that made exploring the Spencer mansion a terrifying experience. It's an expertly crafted game from Shinji Mikami, who had previously cut his teeth on various child-friendly fare, including *Aladdin* and *Goof Troop*. *Resident Evil* (or *Biohazard* as it was known in Japan) arguably saw the up-and-coming director grow up and the genre grew up right beside him. Even today *Resident Evil* remains a gripping adventure, although many will no doubt want to revisit its excellent remakes found later in this book.

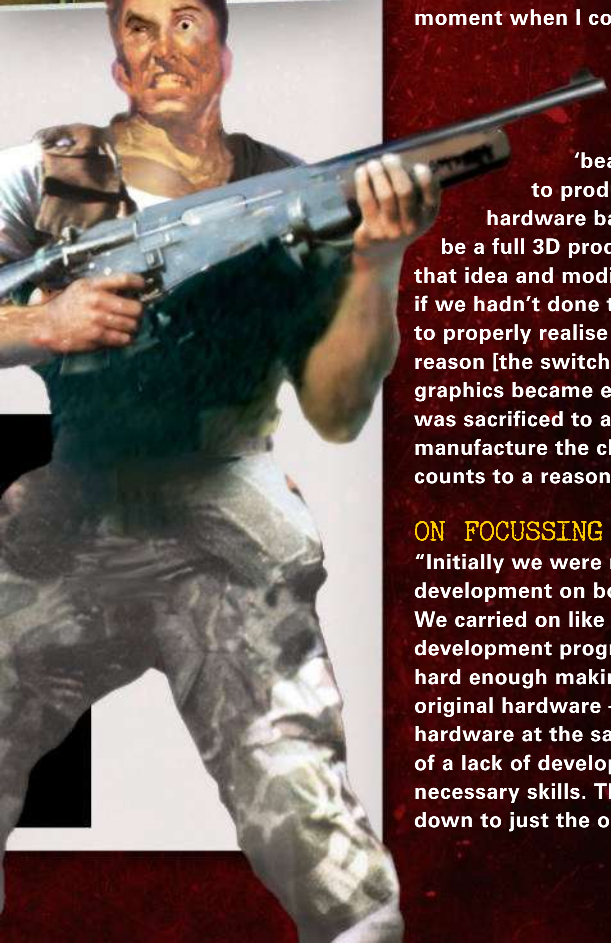
NEW TAKE, OLD GAME

RESIDENT EVIL: DIRECTOR'S CUT

PLAYSTATION, 1997

There are actually two versions of *Director's Cut* – one that supports DualShock and one that doesn't. The game itself is a solid update of the original with a new Beginner's mode, as well as an Arranged version, which features new locations for key items, new clothes for each character and a much more powerful gun. One word of warning: it's rapidly rising in price now.





THE MINI-MAKING OF RESIDENT EVIL

SHINJI MIKAMI REVISITS HIS HIT SURVIVAL HORROR GAME

ON CHOOSING ZOMBIES OVER GHOSTS

"I ended up realising that the game's enemies needed to be monsters of some description, as close as possible to humans in form, rather than spirits. Yes, I thought – zombies! At that time I recalled the film, *Dawn Of The Dead*; I loved that film. It was unfortunate, as far as the audience was concerned, that they couldn't survive; but with a game, the players could use their own techniques and thinking in order to survive the experience. I thought that this difference between horror games and horror movies could be something wonderful. That was the moment when I conceived *Biohazard*."

ON *RESIDENT EVIL'S* PRE-RENDERED VISUALS

"You couldn't really call *Biohazard* 'beautiful' now. It was incredibly difficult to produce the game for the PlayStation hardware back then. Initially it was intended to be a full 3D production, but we had to give up on that idea and modify *Biohazard* to use pre-rendering: if we hadn't done that, it would have been impossible to properly realise my plans for the game. For that reason [the switch to pre-rendered environments] the graphics became exceptionally good, though operability was sacrificed to achieve that. It was very difficult to manufacture the characters while reducing their polygon counts to a reasonable level."

ON FOCUSSING ON THE PLAYSTATION VERSION

"Initially we were moving ahead with simultaneous development on both formats [PlayStation and Saturn]. We carried on like that for about a year, but then that development program had to be suspended. It was hard enough making *Biohazard* for one piece of new, original hardware – developing it for two types of hardware at the same time was just too difficult because of a lack of development staff and a shortage of the necessary skills. That's why we decided to whittle things down to just the one console version."

RESIDENT EVIL

GAMECUBE, VARIOUS, 2002

When Capcom revealed that its next brace of *Resident Evil* games, including *Resident Evil 4*, would be exclusive to the GameCube there was uproar from those gamers that didn't own the console. Capcom saved face, however, with this astonishing update of the original game that remains one of the best remakes of recent times. In addition to some truly astonishing visuals, *Resident Evil* on the GameCube is retrofitted with many of the later *Resi* mechanics, including the 180-degree turn and the ability to judge a character's health based on their on-screen actions, so it feels far more fluid to play than the PlayStation original.

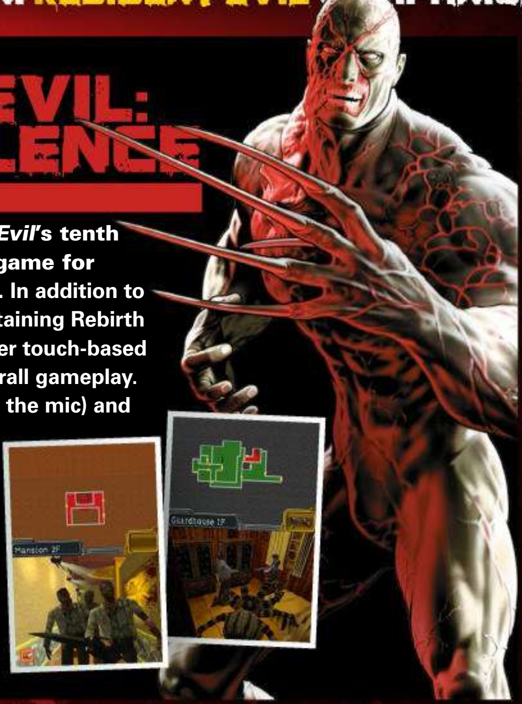
Capcom's ambitious remake also includes several new areas that were cut from the PlayStation release, equips Jill and Chris with handy defensive weapons and introduces the dreaded Crimson Head Zombies – extremely fast and dangerous foes that replace those zombies that weren't fully destroyed by the player on their first encounter. It was re-released on the Wii in 2009, but added very little over the original GameCube version. A far better HD update is currently available for PC and contemporary consoles.

TAP TO KILL

RESIDENT EVIL: DEADLY SILENCE

DS, 2006

Capcom celebrated *Resident Evil*'s tenth anniversary by remaking the game for Nintendo's dual-screened portable. In addition to the original game it features the entertaining Rebirth mode, which introduces plenty of clever touch-based additions that greatly improve the overall gameplay. Zombie slashing, CPR (by blowing into the mic) and shaking off enemies all add to the atmosphere, while the smaller screen enhances the creepy vibes of the classic game. Rebirth also includes a couple of minigames for up to four players that adds further meat to what is essentially yet another remake of the beloved PlayStation classic.



REMAKING A MASTERPIECE

HIROYUKI KOBAYASHI ON THE GAMECUBE UPDATE OF RESIDENT EVIL

WHAT MADE YOU REVISIT *RESIDENT EVIL* ON THE GAMECUBE?

"The decision to create a remake on the GameCube was made by Shinji Mikami. At the time the game was being developed, the GameCube was the most suitable hardware in terms of allowing us to realise our vision with the title."

HOW DID THE CRIMSON HEAD ZOMBIES COME TO BE?

"The idea for Crimson Heads actually came from the director, Shinji Mikami. I think they were a really successful new element that brought a new dimension to the zombies in the game."

WHY GIVE CHARACTERS A CLOSE-QUARTERS WEAPON?

"As part of rebalancing the gameplay, we wanted to give players an additional way to get away from zombies and add a new combat element."

HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT MAKING THE NEW BACKGROUNDS?

"Creating the motion video backgrounds was a real challenge, in terms of making it work on the console hardware. We created them as 3D environments on what was then very high-end equipment, and then rendered still images and videos from those."

HOW WAS IT REVISITING THE ICONIC MANSION?

"Designing the layout for the mansion was a lot of fun. We would try to put ourselves in the shoes of the player walking through the rooms, and imagine which areas would be the best place to hide something scary."

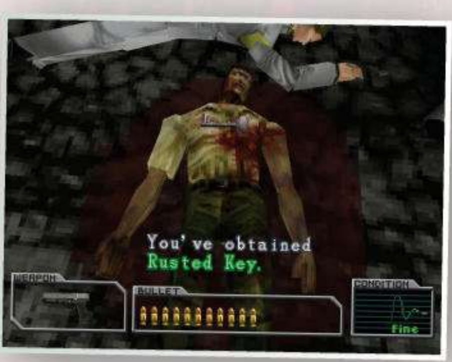
LIGHTGUN GAMES

FUN, BUT FIDDLY

RESIDENT EVIL SURVIVOR

PLAYSTATION, PC, 2000

Unlike previous titles, *Resident Evil*'s first spin-off is essentially a lightgun game, but one where you have free movement. Things get slightly easier when using a lightgun, but it remains a fiddly experience due to the clunky controls. It's a pity the gameplay is so laborious (particularly the US version, which lacks lightgun support), as *Survivor* actually makes a good attempt at transferring the *Resi* universe into a first-person world.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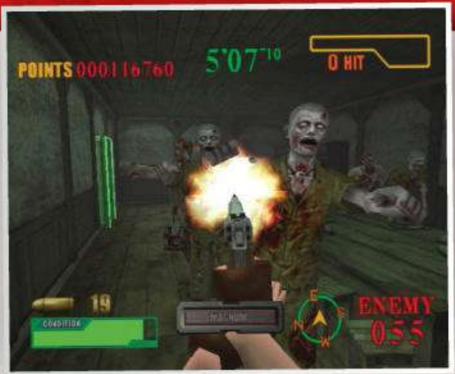
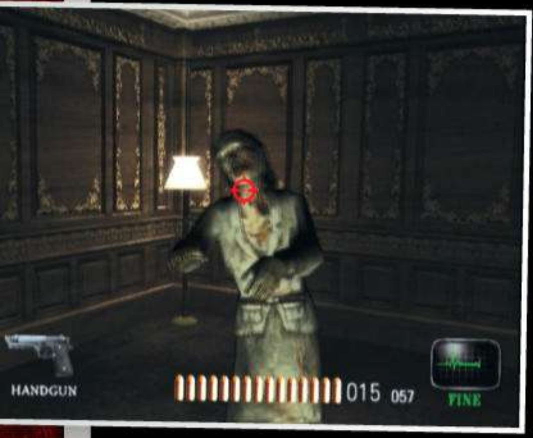


IMPROVEMENT NEEDED

RESIDENT EVIL SURVIVOR 2 - CODE: VERONICA

ARCADE, PS2, 2001

While the second *Survivor* game is a notable improvement, it's still rather lacking. Based on *Code: Veronica*, players control Claire Redfield or Steve Burnside and can use both lightguns and joypads. In addition to featuring two unique modes (Dungeon and Arcade), *Survivor 2* also introduces partner assistance, in the form of a computer-controlled player that will lay down cover fire for you. Additionally, *Resident Evil 3*'s Nemesis appears if players dawdle for too long.



ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

RESIDENT EVIL: DEAD AIM

PLAYSTATION 2, 2003

While *Dead Aim* is the first game in the series to combine both first-person and third-person views, it's hampered by the same grid-based control system that made the earlier games such a pain to control. It certainly looks pretty, with impressive visuals, and the ability to move and shoot makes it stand apart from many of the other games in the series, but it's still a bland mishmash of genres.

ON RAILS AND ON TARGET

RESIDENT EVIL: THE UMBRELLA CHRONICLES

WII, PS3, 2007

Rebecca
0006
7

This was the logical evolution of the *Gun Survivor* series and it works exceptionally well. *The Umbrella Chronicles* is an enjoyable on-rails shooter that focusses on the events depicted in the first three games and *Resident Evil Zero*. Although it's possible to look around the playing area with the Wii's Nunchuk, the focus is on mowing down classic enemies as they continually assault you. There are a large number of levels to unlock and plenty of alternate routes, ensuring that *The Umbrella Chronicles* has lots of replay value.

UPPING THE ANTE

RESIDENT EVIL: THE DARKSIDE CHRONICLES

WII, PS3, 2009

Capcom's second Wii shooter is business as usual, although it offers an improved story and enhanced visuals that greatly add to the game's atmosphere. Although it only draws upon two games – *Resident Evil 2* and *Code: Veronica*, it's actually a lot more character-orientated than *The Umbrella Chronicles*. Numerous gameplay mechanics have been tweaked, meaning it's a little more accessible than its earlier counterpart as well. As with *The Umbrella Chronicles* an HD remaster of the game was released in 2012 for PlayStation 3.

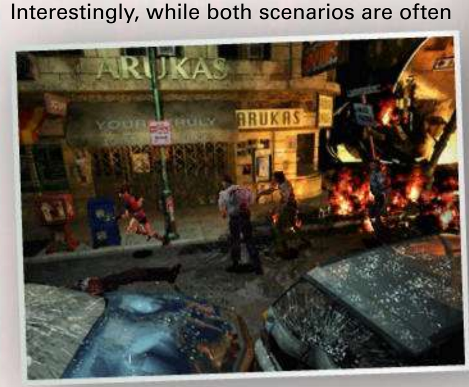
THE BLOCKBUSTER SEQUEL

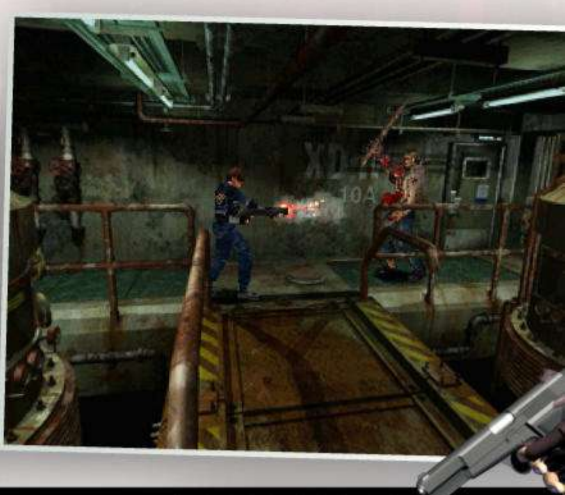
RESIDENT EVIL 2

PLAYSTATION, VARIOUS, 1998

It's telling that the two best *Resident Evil* games both feature Leon S Kennedy. Set two months after the events of the first game, Capcom's sequel not only further establishes the convoluted plot that the series would become famous for, but also ramps up virtually every aspect of the game. The locations are larger, with the vast majority of the game taking place in Raccoon City's police station, while the visuals are greatly enhanced, matched by a simply stunning soundtrack.

Resident Evil 2 focusses on two characters, Leon S Kennedy and Claire Redfield, and is spread across two discs. Interestingly, while both scenarios are often set in the same locations, their puzzles and storylines change dramatically, greatly adding to the filmic atmosphere that director Hideki Kamiya wanted to create. *Resident Evil 2* also introduces support characters, including the infamous Ada Wong, who appear at certain points of the adventure and are occasionally playable. It's also memorable for being the first game in the series to give you visual clues to your character's current health status: handy, as it's not an easy game.

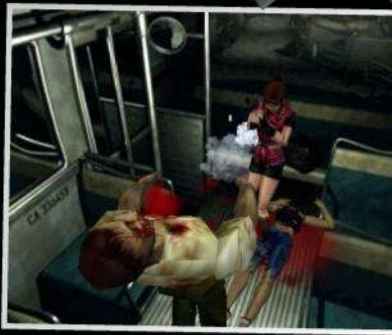




THE IMPOSSIBLE CONVERSION

YOU'RE ATTEMPTING TO DO WHAT?

While *Resident Evil 2* appears on a variety of platforms, the Nintendo 64 version is particularly impressive. Cramming two CDs of game onto a single cartridge while retaining features like FMV is quite amazing, but Angel Studios also added an item randomiser, bonus files and high-resolution display support.



THE IMPACT OF RESIDENT EVIL 2

REMAKE PRODUCER YOSHIAKI HIRABAYASHI DISSECTS THE ORIGINAL

WHAT MAKES THE POLICE STATION SUCH AN INTERESTING SETTING FOR A SURVIVAL HORROR GAME?

"My opinion is that a police station is a good contrast with the danger of the situation the characters find themselves in. It should be a safe place, so finding it to be such a dangerous place is a very interesting motif."

THE ORIGINAL *RESIDENT EVIL* STARTS SLOWLY, BUT *RESIDENT EVIL 2* HAS LOTS OF ENEMIES ON THE FIRST SCREEN. WHY IS THIS CONTRAST IMPORTANT?

"I think that *Resident Evil* used its setting of being trapped in a single location to build up tension as the nature of the situation was revealed gradually, but when it came time to make the sequel, that was an established part of the story and it was probably seen as more effective to immediately message to the player just how much bigger in scale the situation is."

OF ALL THE CREATURES, WHY DO YOU THINK THE LICKER BECAME SO ICONIC?

"Zombies are, visually speaking, an extension of normal humans, but the Licker takes the internals of the human body – which we all know we have inside us but rarely, if ever, see for ourselves – and lays them bare in a way that's a great, shocking contrast with the more human-looking zombies. Its ability to climb over walls and ceilings fluidly also contrasts well with the zombies."

RESIDENT EVIL 2 IS OFTEN CONSIDERED TO BE THE BEST OF THE "ORIGINAL STYLE" *RESIDENT EVIL* GAMES. WHY DO YOU THINK FANS STILL HOLD IT IN SUCH HIGH REGARD?

"*Resident Evil 2* was able to keep the survival horror atmosphere of the first game while substantially scaling up the dramatic and entertaining story and gameplay for an all-round incredible experience. Different players enjoy the series in their own different ways, but *Resident Evil 2* was a game which had pretty much all the different aspects of *Resident Evil* that fans love."

THE LAST ESCAPE

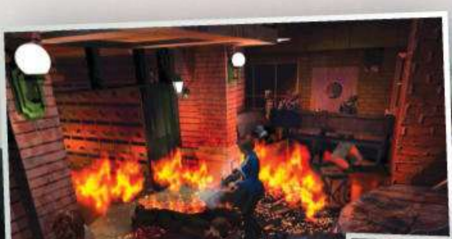
RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS

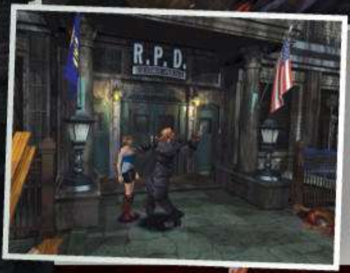
PLAYSTATION, VARIOUS, 1999

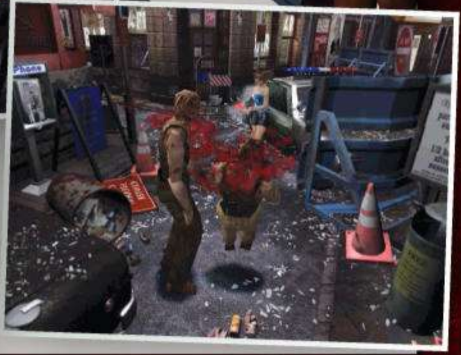
Set 24 hours before the events of *Resident Evil 2*, *Resident Evil 3* follows Jill Valentine's attempt to escape from Raccoon City while being pursued by the Nemesis of the title – a huge biomechanically created creature that comes equipped with a rocket launcher, absorbs bullets like a cheap sponge and relentlessly chases Jill during key points of the game.

Some consider *Nemesis* to be something of a back step for the series, as it has one protagonist rather than two and revisits the previous game's setting. However, it introduces many key mechanics, most notably the incredibly useful 180-degree turn and a handy dodge attack. Both new moves are particularly useful as you'll need as much agility as you can muster in order to deal with the game's frequent enemy encounters.

Yes it's more linear than the previous games, but the assaults of Nemesis, the ability to craft ammunition and being able to use oil drums to create explosive damage to nearby enemies makes the game far more action-packed as a result. Oh, and it introduces the minigame 'The Mercenaries – Operation: Mad Jackal'.







DREAMS BECOME NIGHTMARES

RESIDENT EVIL - CODE: VERONICA

DREAMCAST, 2000

Code: Veronica **never seems to get the love it deserves, possibly because it was the first *Resi* game not to debut on a Sony console.** This one focusses on the Redfield siblings, with Claire caught up in an outbreak on the Rockfort Island prison after being captured by Umbrella. It's the first game in the series to use 3D backgrounds and a movable camera and occasionally switches to first-person when using certain weapons. The new ability to pick up and use herbs when your inventory is full also makes a huge difference.

THE VIRUS MUTATES

RESIDENT EVIL - CODE: VERONICA X

DREAMCAST, PLAYSTATION 2, VARIOUS, 2001

Although *Code Veronica* was a sales success by Dreamcast standards, the game deserved a wider audience than Sega's platform could afford it, so Capcom set about creating an updated version which was released for the Dreamcast in Japan and the PS2 worldwide. It's largely the same game, with slightly improved visuals and about ten minutes of additional cutscenes that focus on the increasing popularity of Albert Wesker. It also features an additional DVD called 'Wesker's Report', which delves deeper into the shady character. It received an HD re-release in 2011.

RACCOON CITY REIMAGINED

RESIDENT EVIL 2

VARIOUS, 2019

Carrying on the fine tradition of remakes it started in 2002, Capcom managed to bring a new sense of terror to a fan favourite with its return to Raccoon City. That's partially because of the way the game smartly toys with the expectations of returning fans by rearranging key events, but also because the rotting abominations you encounter are more detailed and gruesome than ever before.

Ditching fixed camera angles for an over-the-shoulder presentation gives the game a fresh feel, as do new concerns like the need to board up windows to prevent unwanted undead incursions. But the star of the show is the Tyrant nicknamed Mr X, an invincible adversary that constantly hunts for Leon and Claire and will doggedly pursue them once they've been found.

THE GHOST SURVIVORS

VICTIM BLAMING IS FUN

A few weeks after *Resident Evil 2*'s initial release, a new mode named The Ghost Survivors was added as a free update. This mode allows you to play as some of the game's many victims, including Robert Kendo, Katherine Warren, Ghost and Daniel Cortini, and explore ways in which they could have survived.

NEMESIS NEVER DIES

RESIDENT EVIL 3

VARIOUS, 2020

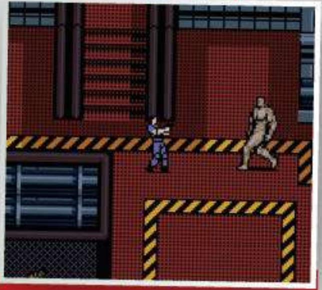
As you'd expect, this game revisits Jill Valentine's escape from Raccoon City as she is pursued by Nemesis. The game was developed in tandem with the *Resident Evil 2* remake, taking advantage of the shared setting of Raccoon City to achieve a quick turnaround, and due to the shorter length of the game it features *Resident Evil: Resistance* as a multiplayer component.

Like the *Resident Evil 2* remake, *Resident Evil 3* is a visually fantastic game, and the controls have been appropriately adjusted for the extra action. However, various sections from the original game, such as the clock tower, are omitted from this version, and the feeling of unpredictability surrounding Nemesis is undercut by his appearance in scripted sequences. The plot has been fairly heavily adjusted, and the multiple endings of the original game are no longer present. It's not a bad game by any means, offering genuinely thrilling moments, but it was created from slightly weaker source material than its predecessor and it's not as good a remake.

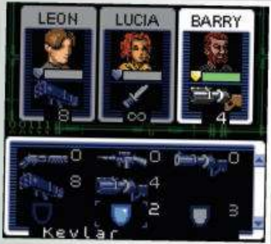
TERROR GOES PORTABLE

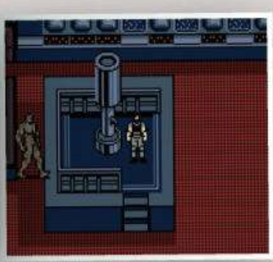
RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN

GAME BOY COLOR, 2001



Capcom's first *Resident Evil* handheld release has something of an interesting past, with a background that's just as interesting as the final game. *Gaiden* was predominantly created by British developer M4, making it the first title in the series to be created outside Japan. It's also linked to the *Dino Crisis* series, as M4 was working on a demo for that particular franchise, before Capcom asked it to go ahead with a standalone *Resident Evil* game (a Game Boy Color remake of the original PlayStation game by Hot Gen Studios was cancelled in favour of M4's game). Despite what you may have heard, *Gaiden* is nowhere near as bad as reports suggest, thanks to a huge tanker to explore, Barry Burton getting some much-needed limelight as one of the main characters, and a slick combat system that switches to first-person whenever the player engages zombies (the perspective was inspired by the hit game *Dungeon Master)*. It was never going to capture the atmosphere of the PlayStation original, but *Gaiden* remains a resoundingly solid adventure. Just be aware that it's now quite pricey to procure.





MOBILE MADNESS

RESIDENT EVIL GETS DOWNSIZED

***Resident Evil* has appeared on various mobile devices with varying degrees of success. First up was 2003's *Resident Evil: The Missions. Confidential Report* followed in 2005 and was a turn-based strategy game – a first for the series. *Genesis* was a puzzle game that appeared in 2008 and received a sequel, *Uprising*, a few years later. There was a social game in the form of 2011's *Outbreak Survive*, and shooters in the form of *Assault The Nightmare* and *Zombie Buster*. The most successful offerings have been on iOS however, and include cut-down versions of *Resident Evil 4* and Mercenaries. There's also *Degeneration* and *Afterlife*, which are based on their respective movies. Sadly, virtually all the mentioned games are now delisted.**

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PORTABLE HORROR

TIM HULL ON THE CULT GAME BOY COLOR GAME

ON WORKING WITH CAPCOM

"They gave us the basic storyline, we developed and embellished it. Capcom gave us a mission to create a game of ever-increasing tension; we did the rest. Throughout the process we made proposals and Capcom accepted, with some minor but compulsory changes. The biggest issues were the scale of the graphics, size of the maps and the combat control system. The GBC dictated most of what was possible though."

CREATING THE BATTLE MODE

"The Battle mode was influenced by a personal favourite of mine: *Dungeon Master* for the Atari ST. We conceived of the game as over-head exploration with first-person combat from the outset. Perhaps that's one reason Capcom chose us. [Shinji] Mikami was particularly impressed with the first-person combat. If I remember right, it was Mikami who wanted the slider bar added. I balked at the idea at first, but after implementation I could see the reason why: it makes the combat far more tense."

WORKING WITH SHINJI MIKAMI

"The strengths of the *Resident Evil* series that you enjoy, especially where it relates to survival horror, were very much driven by Mikami's personal direction. We were lucky enough to have Mikami's attention. There were times when we were perplexed at his decisions, but his purist approach and our dedication to fulfilling the brief really did give the game its fear factor."

BIG DREAMS, SMALL SCALE

RESIDENT EVIL: REVELATIONS

3DS, VARIOUS, 2012

While *Revelations* looks ambitious for a 3DS game, it also feels quite budget-like in places. Its core campaign covers several characters and locations, and it's notable for introducing *Metroid Prime*-style scanning and a Raid Mode that sees you battling through arranged versions of earlier scenarios. An HD release followed for home systems.

BITE-SIZED SCARES

RESIDENT EVIL: REVELATIONS 2

VARIOUS, 2015

It's not a pure handheld release but Capcom's sequel is still interesting. It has an episodic structure and focusses on Jill Valentine, Barry Burton and his daughter Moira, and is surprisingly stealth-like in places. The main campaign is somewhat average but the excellent Raid Mode from *Revelations* returns.

BEFORE THE BEGINNING

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

GAMECUBE, VARIOUS, 2002

Originally planned for the N64's ill-fated 64DD, this prequel was switched to the N64 before eventually resurfacing on the GameCube. The game explores the events leading up to the Spencer Mansion incident of the original *Resident Evil*, with STARS Bravo Team member Rebecca Chambers boarding Umbrella's Ecliptic Express train during a search for escaped prisoner Billy Coen. Many don't like *Zero*, possibly because it has a far more insectoid theme than previous games, with zombies taking a noticeable backseat to giant scorpions, huge centipedes and other creepy-crawlies.

By far *Zero*'s best feature is its excellent Partner Zapping mechanic that lets the player switch between both characters at will. Rebecca is versatile but weak, while Billy is built like a tank and can use a lighter and push heavy objects. Both characters' abilities must be combined together to complete the many puzzles thrown at you, making it a unique addition to the series. A lazy Wii port showed up in 2008, and an HD remaster followed in 2016.

SILVER SCREEN SCARES

RESIDENT EVIL AT THE MOVIES

Capcom's *Resident Evil* series is easily the most prolific videogame licence to appear on the big screen. While the quality of the films ranges from okay to "god, my eyes, my eyes", the series has generated over $1.2 billion. Paul W S Anderson was involved in the first six live-action films, each starring Milla Jovovich as the original character Alice, while the 2021 series reboot *Resident Evil: Welcome To Raccoon City* focusses on the characters of the first two games.

Capcom has also released numerous animated adaptations, beginning with the short film *Biohazard 4D-Executer* in 2000. *Resident Evil: Degeneration* kicked off a series of projects set in the same universe as the actual games in 2008. This was followed up with *Damnation*, *Vendetta*, the *Infinite Darkness* Netflix series and the forthcoming *Resident Evil: Death Island*, with Leon S Kennedy starring across the series. In 2022, a poorly received live-action adaptation for Netflix told the tale of Albert Wesker and his twin daughters Jade and Billie.

SURVIVAL HORROR GETS REINVENTED

RESIDENT EVIL 4

GAMECUBE, VARIOUS, 2005

Shinji Mikami's sequel is quite possibly one of the most important games of the last two decades. In addition to breathing fresh life into the series, it reinvented action games and the third-person shooter, influencing the likes of *Gears Of War*, *Dead Space* and many others.

Mikami essentially redesigned *Resident Evil 4* several times before he settled on the cocktail of action and horror that appears in the final game. Moving the camera closer to Leon pulls you into the on-screen action, while the ability to shoot at specific body parts makes managing the large crowd of enemies you face far tenser. Context-sensitive buttons allow Leon to pull off an impressive number of moves, from roundhousing enemies to kicking down ladders and stabbing the necks of giants, while the new inventory system kept the tedious item management of earlier games to a bare minimum.

Resident Evil 4's setpieces are still some of the best around, while its dynamic pacing, variety and tense shepherding of Ashley (who Leon has been sent to rescue) make it stand apart from its many peers. It's arguably more action than horror, but it was just what the series and the genre needed. And it still managed to pull off a series of incredibly gruesome scenes, proving that while Mikami was content to take the series in a new direction, he hadn't forgotten what had made it popular in the first place. While HD versions of the game do exist, we'd argue that the enhanced Wii port (shown here) is the definitive version to own, along with the excellent VR game on page 22.

REDEFINING SURVIVAL HORROR

HIROYUKI KOBAYASHI ON *RESIDENT EVIL 4*

WHY TAKE A NEW DIRECTION FOR *RESIDENT EVIL*?

"Our focus was on creating something completely new with *Resident Evil 4* and pushing the series in a new direction. In the course of development, we created prototypes and tested them out – if we weren't satisfied with them, we started from scratch. In the end, we went through four different versions of the game before settling on the direction in which we wanted to go."

RESIDENT EVIL 4 DOESN'T HAVE ZOMBIES. WHY?

"By that point in the series, zombies were simply no longer scary to players. They had become cannon fodder that you could defeat with ease. We wanted something not like the enemies you'd seen before that would bring back the sense of the unfamiliar and the frightening, and that was the genesis of Los Ganados."

WHY USE AN OVER-THE-SHOULDER VIEWPOINT FOR THIS GAME?

"We took a look at games that were popular in the Western market at the time, around 2005, and it was clear to us that games which let you aim and shoot with precision in that third-person style were the way to go. Getting the position of the camera behind the player just right was a very arduous process of refinement. It's just one part of the game but you really need to nail it as it influences every other aspect of the gameplay."

WHAT IN PARTICULAR INSPIRED THE NEW INVENTORY SYSTEM?

"Funnily enough, *Tetris* was the inspiration. I thought it would be fun if you had to play a puzzle game where you tried to fit the pieces together as best you could without any gaps to maximise efficiency."

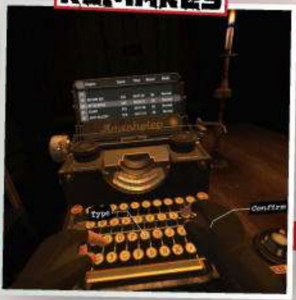
WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE MOMENT FROM THE GAME?

"I really like the boss fight against Jack Krauser. His knife moves were so cool!"

STEP INTO THE TERROR

RESIDENT EVIL 4 VR

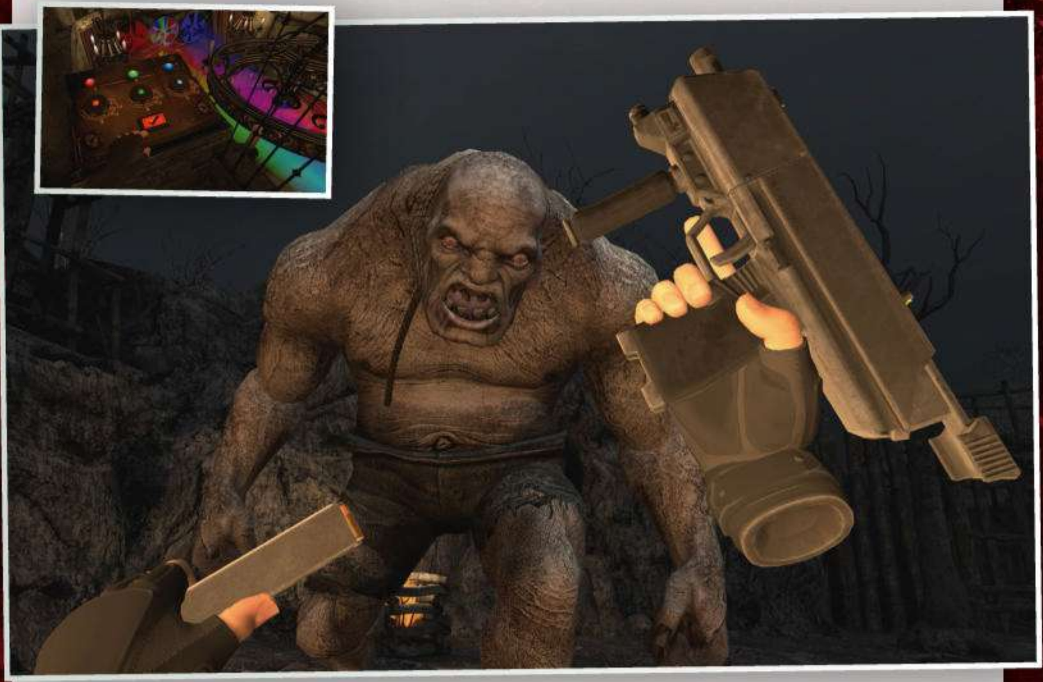
OCULUS QUEST 2, 2021



There was a lot riding on Armature Studios' remake of *Resident Evil 4* when it was announced for Oculus Quest 2, with many wondering how on Earth the game could possibly work in VR. Sceptics needn't have been concerned as Armature did a stunning job and the result is arguably the most exciting way to experience Capcom's highly acclaimed game.

The bad news is that the game's cutscenes and various QuickTime Events like Leon jumping through a window or kicking someone are now relegated to a movie screen which occasionally breaks the game's flow. The good news is everything else.

In addition to utilising the same first-person perspective found in *Resident Evil VII*, Armature's game frees up Leon's movement (you no longer stand still while shooting) allows you to easily access weapons from various parts of your body, lets you load your weapons in real time and even type on the typewriters to save your progress. Sure, the extra mobility makes the game slightly easier but the sheer atmosphere created by the VR environment really is something else. If you haven't seen an El Gigante loom menacingly over you in VR you haven't lived.



ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT?

RESIDENT EVIL 4

VARIOUS, 2023

Considering the sheer popularity of *Resident Evil 4*, it's not surprising to see how much excitement is building around Capcom's latest remake. Due to launch this month, *Resident Evil 4* looks to be largely based on the original game's plot, although we're fully expecting it to have some new twists like we saw with the remakes of *Resident Evil 2* and *3*.

The thing that we're most interested in is how *Resi 4*'s gameplay mechanics will evolve compared to the original. While Capcom has already announced several important changes (see below) many feel more like quality-of-life improvements. The remakes of *Resident Evil 2* and *3* were a huge departure from the original PlayStation games, but the original *Resident Evil 4* already incorporated many of those key changes, including the over-the-shoulder viewpoint and targeting of enemies. *Resident Evil 4* VR proved there is still plenty of life in the game, so we're excited to see what Capcom does.

TIME FOR A CHANGE

WHAT'S DIFFERENT FROM THE ORIGINAL GAME?

If you're worried that *Resident Evil 4* will play identically to the 2005 classic, think again. According to a recent feature in *Game Informer*, Ashley can no longer be instructed to hide, which should make protecting her far more interesting, while her health bar has been removed as well and you'll need to revive her when she's down. The polarising QTEs are greatly reduced, while you'll also be able to do sidequests beyond the coin collecting found in the original. A large number of control schemes will be available, at least one new Ganado will be making an appearance, knives are now durable and you can trade jewels with the Merchant. Frankly, we can't wait to play it. Here's hoping Capcom nails it.

UNITED WE LIVE

RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

PLAYSTATION 2, 2003

Plans for *Outbreak* had circled around the Capcom offices for a good five years before the game became a reality. It's an interesting addition to the series, featuring online play, a large number of characters (eight, in fact) and five unique scenarios to fight through. Sadly, the ability to play with three other players was completely stripped from the PAL version of the game, making for a horrendously frustrating experience, as you often find yourself ill-equipped to deal with the large number of zombies the game throws at you. Mechanically it's exactly what you'd expect from a *Resident Evil* game, but the pacing, carefully placed scares and strong boss encounters are nowhere to be seen.

DIVIDED WE DIE

JOIN THE WINNING TEAM?

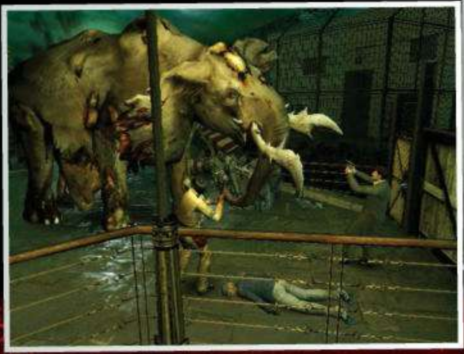
Though most of *Resident Evil Outbreak* can be experienced offline, reaching a 100% infection rate will simply end your game. During online games, this would instead transform your character into a zombie, allowing you to attack your former partners in a bid to thwart their attempted escape from Raccoon City.

ONLINE ENCORE

RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK: FILE #2

PLAYSTATION 2, 2004

***Outbreak*'s sequel is awesome because it features zombie elephants.** Okay, so it's not incredible, but it's a far better structured game than *Outbreak* thanks to better balance, more interesting scenarios and numerous little tweaks to the gameplay. The original eight characters return and this time PAL users got to experience full online play. Despite both games' servers being pulled by Capcom, fans have kept the Japanese versions going on private servers.



KILL YOUR FRIENDS

RESIDENT EVIL: RESISTANCE

VARIOUS, 2020

Released as part of *Resident Evil 3* remake but considered somewhat distinct from it, *Resistance* pits four players against the usual mutated monstrosities. The twist here is that a fifth player acts as the mastermind, taking the role of series villains including Annette Birkin and Ozwell E Spencer in order to set traps and unleash enemies to thwart the survivors. Critical reception was mixed due to balance and connectivity issues.

20 Chris
6
COVER
10 Sheva
4

CAN I CALL A FRIEND?

RESIDENT EVIL 5

VARIOUS, 2009

The first *Resident Evil* game for the then-next-gen consoles was a long time coming and quite controversial, due to all the racism claims that surrounded it upon release. What's interesting about *Resident Evil 5* is that it's essentially two different games depending on how you play through it. Play on your own and Capcom's game becomes amazingly frustrating because newcomer Sheva is utterly useless as a supporting AI character. She constantly stumbles into trouble, easily gets herself surrounded by enemies and rarely gives you help when it's needed.

Play with a second player, however, and the game transforms dramatically. It lacks the well-structured pace of *4* of course, and the less said about the lousy cover system the better, but it's otherwise a lot of fun. There's something immensely satisfying about exploring the African setting with a friend, while the version of Mercenaries that is included is tremendously entertaining to play. There's a definite move towards all-out action compared to *4* – it's as action-packed as Chris' biceps are huge – and the final boss is a disappointment, but it's otherwise a solid addition to the series. The later *Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition* adds a bunch of DLC content and costumes, including the mini-adventures Lost In Nightmares and Desperate Escape.

BIGGER DOESN'T MEAN BETTER

RESIDENT EVIL 6

VARIOUS, 2012

Spread across four large scenarios and featuring an extremely lengthy campaign mode, *Resident Evil 6* is a bizarre, bloated AAA game that tries far too hard. Granted, there are plenty of great action sequences to be found and the combat arguably makes for some of the best in the series, but there's way too much filler, which massively hinders the game. Like *Resident Evil 5*, it works far better with a second player, and it's also supported by some good multiplayer modes, including Agent Hunt, Mercenaries and a PC exclusive subgame called No Mercy, which features the *Left 4 Dead 2* cast. Each scenario is built around a specific character (Leon S Kennedy, Chris Redfield, Jake Muller and Ada Wong) and they vary greatly in their style and pacing, with Leon's adventure delivering the most authentic *Resi* experience. While the game divided critics, it still managed to sell over ten million copies.

MULTIPLAYER MADNESS

THE DLC THAT EXPANDED *RESIDENT EVIL 6*'S ONLINE PLAY

PREDATOR

Designed for up to six players, one takes the role of the deadly Ustanak while the others must avoid capture. Play ends once everyone has played as the deadly abomination.

SURVIVORS

This is a 'last man standing' mode that caters for teams or single players. Getting killed in Survivors turns you into a zombie or J'avo, requiring you to kill again to restore your humanity.

ONSLAUGHT

Horde modes are popular in multiplayer games and this is a great take on it. Killing enemies in chains (up to 30) sends them to your opponent to deal with. Frantic, but hella fun.

TERROR EVOLVES

RESIDENT EVIL 7 BIOHAZARD

VARIOUS, 2017

Perhaps realising that the over-the-top action of recent games was getting out of hand, *Biohazard* saw the series returning to its survival horror roots. Capcom made many changes to distinguish *Biohazard* from more recent *Resi* games, with the most notable difference being a first-person viewpoint and the introduction of Ethan Winters, a civilian looking for his missing wife who lacks the combat skills of past *Resident Evil* protagonists.

Despite its startling new viewpoint (which really comes alive when played in PSVR), *Biohazard* shares plenty of DNA with the original game and even gives you a huge foreboding mansion to explore, this time belonging to a mysterious family called the Bakers. As Ethan explores their creepy estate he finds clever puzzles, plenty of interesting boss encounters and a surprisingly decent story that weaves into the series' admittedly confusing lore. The real highlight of *Biohazard*, however, is its astonishing VR mode, and while some couldn't get past Ethan's disembodied hands (a side effect of the medium) we found it to be a sensational way of losing yourself in the rich Louisiana-set hellscape that Capcom created.

A WINTERS' TALE

RESIDENT EVIL VILLAGE

VARIOUS, 2021

Ethan Winters must be one of gaming's unluckiest protagonists as he spends most of his new adventure looking for his kidnapped daughter Rosemary. His quest takes him to a remote Eastern European village, which riffs heavily on *Resi 4* and also acts as a hub, with new areas of it becoming available the more Ethan explores.

Village has a far greater emphasis on combat, and the training Ethan has received between games means he's far more capable than he was in *Biohazard*. These newfound skills are needed because *Village* is a far tougher game than *Biohazard* and its memorable bosses will certainly test your skills.

It certainly lacks the considered pace of *Biohazard* and gets a little too gun-heavy in its final third, but if you can get past the silly storyline you'll find plenty to enjoy here. Like *Biohazard* it's also available as a Gold Edition with numerous extras. A free VR update for PSVR2 is also available.

FEELS FAMILIAR

VILLAGE'S SIMILARITIES TO *RESIDENT EVIL 4*

THE VILLAGE

Ethan's quest begins in a similarly ramshackle village to the one Leon encounters in *Resident Evil 4*. While the villagers here are no less deadly, there are far more secrets to discover than in Leon's adventure.

ITEM MANAGEMENT

Managing your items in *Resident Evil 4* almost felt like a game at times and you'll find that *Village* uses a similar inventory system. You'll be constantly reorganising items to maximise efficiency.

THE MERCHANT

Resi 4 introduced a merchant who would sell you useful items and popped up in unlikely places. The same thing happens in *Village*; the Duke is a cheery fellow who offers meals as well as items and upgrades.

MEMORABLE BOSSES

There are a number of truly memorable antagonists in *Resident Evil 4* and *Village* is no different. From the hulking Lady Dimitrescu to the deformed Salvatore Moreau, each will leave a lasting impression.

SHOOT TO THRILL

RESIDENT EVIL: THE MERCENARIES 3D

3DS, 2011

In addition to redefining the franchise, *Resident Evil 4* is also notable for introducing a more arcade-like version of The Mercenaries, the fantastic score-attack game where you kill enemies to rack up points before your allotted time runs out. While this update would go on to become a staple of all the later mainline games, this exclusive 3DS title is the only time it has received a standalone physical release.

While its 3D effect isn't the best, Tose's blaster still proves to be entertaining, even if it brings little new to previous Mercenaries games. Despite the lack of innovation it remains fun with plenty of memorable locations, a host of recognisable characters (although Leon S Kennedy is nowhere to be seen) and a small selection of brutally tough bosses. The included maps are designed to provide plenty of challenge while the graphics really show off the power of Nintendo's handheld system. Just be aware that it's one of the few 3DS games that won't let you delete existing saves so you may want to shy away from a second-hand copy.

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MORE BABOON THAN RACCOON

RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY

VARIOUS, 2012

Conceptually, *Operation Raccoon City* is a great idea, expanding on the online mechanics first hinted at in *Outbreak*. Unfortunately, the game itself is something of a mess due to atrociously bad AI, glitchy visuals and some truly boring setpieces. Despite its overall shoddiness, gamers loved the idea of a *SOCOM*-styled squad-based shooter in the *Resident Evil* universe and it went on to sell over two million copies.

SHOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT FOR DEAD

UMBRELLA CORPS

VARIOUS, 2016

Critically lambasted on release, *Umbrella Corps* is an odd cover-based shooter that is let down by painfully bland map design and unexciting combat. The single-player campaign is essentially a rather generic Horde mode that does little to expand *Resi*'s lore, while cool ideas like the Zombie Jammer are often poorly implemented. Clunky controls and unsatisfying weapons are the final nail in the coffin. *Left 4 Dead* did it far better.

FREE DOESN'T MEAN GOOD

RESIDENT EVIL: RE: VERSE

VARIOUS, 2022

Free to anyone who purchased *Resident Evil Village, Re:Verse* is an interesting concept that has been rather poorly executed. Essentially a deathmatch for up to six players, the twist here is that dying transforms your iconic *Resident Evil* hero into a classic monster from the long-running series. It's a neat idea, but aggressive monetisation and a lack of gameplay modes and maps stops it from reaching its full potential.

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THE MINI
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